

C O N F I D E N T I A L

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FROM: JACQUELINE BLACK, PAB
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DUP CONFERENCE: SPEECH BY PETER ROBINSON

Attached is a copy of the speech by Peter Robinson at the Democratic Unionist Party Conference in the La Mon House Hotel on Saturday 30 November.

Mr Robinson was speaking to the motion that "This Conference is convinced that Northern Ireland's rightful place is within the United Kingdom and believes that this union has been altered and endangered by the Anglo-Irish Agreement...." The speech was a robust condemnation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement which Mr Robinson claimed put the union in peril while it existed, and called for unionists to "engage in a campaign to save the union" and if it cannot be saved "to save our people from Dublin Rule". He continued by stressing that the party believed that "an Independent Ulster is not an alternative to the Union" but is an alternative to "a United Ireland or to a mutation between Dublin Rule and Direct Rule".

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Mr Robinson emphasised that neither a Conservative nor a Labour government could be trusted or expected to strengthen the Union and likened Mrs Thatcher's argument that the United Kingdom was being placed on a conveyor belt towards European Union to the unionists being on a drip-feed to a united Ireland.

Mr Robinson commented on the possible setting up of a Northern Ireland Select Committee at Westminster, which while this was to be welcomed in terms of democratic accountability would only have a limited role in scrutinising the Northern Ireland Office and was no substitute for devolution.

The speech produced no surprises in its condemnation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and calls for a strengthening of the Union and the motion, as would be expected, was unanimously supported.

The speech did implicitly take issue with the UUP in restating once again that the union is not safe - Jim Molyneaux had declared that in his view it is - and that the Anglo-Irish Agreement must not be accepted. Some in the DUP believe with some reason that some in the UUP no longer see the existence of the Agreement as a major road block. Finally, once again, Peter Robinson refers to independence and while saying that it is not an alternative to the union, nevertheless gets that option on the agenda.

J A Black
~~J A BLACK~~ (Mrs)

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MOTION ON CONSTITUTION

SPEECH BY

PETER ROBINSON MP

DUP ANNUAL CONFERENCE

LA MON HOUSE HOTEL

SATURDAY 30 NOVEMBER

(EMBARGOED UNTIL 12 NOON)

This conference is convinced that Northern Ireland's rightful place is within the United Kingdom and believes that this union is the only basis for the survival of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This conference is unalterably opposed to the Dublin Dictat; refuses to deceive the Ulster people into believing the union is getting or can get stronger while the Dublin Dictat exists; will never accept the Dictat; and maintains that the survival of the union that is the basis of the Anglo-Irish Agreement of the "Dublin Accord" is the only basis for the survival of the party policy and manifesto commitments, in keeping with traditional unionist principles, towards preserving the union on a basis acceptable to our people; maintains there is no role for Dublin in Ulster's internal affairs. This conference supports improvements in democratic accountability at Westminster but recognises such minor changes are no substitute for devolution nor will they bring down the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Mr Chairman, Dr Paisley, fellow officers and members, Garrett Fitzgerald was in town yesterday - I understand it was to launch his autobiography. While Belfast is a better place now that he has returned home, he has, nonetheless, done a service to the unionist community -

MOTION ON CONSTITUTION

This conference is convinced that Northern Ireland's rightful place is within the United Kingdom and believes that this union has been altered and endangered by the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This conference: is unalterably opposed to the Dublin Diktat; refuses to deceive the Ulster people into believing the union is getting or can get stronger while the Dublin Deal exists; will never accept the Diktat; contends it is vital for the survival of the union that an alternative to and replacement of the "Dublin Accord" be established; will work subject to our party policy and manifesto commitments, in keeping with traditional unionist principles, towards preserving the union on a basis acceptable to our people; maintains there is no role for Dublin in Ulster's internal affairs.

This conference supports improvements in democratic accountability at Westminster but recognises such minor changes are no substitute for devolution nor will they bring down the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

concession provided it will not occasion a drastic reaction. In short anything they can get past the unionist community. It is only the method and timing of a

Mr Chairman, Dr Paisley, fellow officers and members, Garrett Fitzgerald was in town yesterday - I understand it was to launch his autobiography. While Belfast is a better place now that he has returned home, he has, nonetheless, done a service to the unionist community - though not intentionally. His autobiography gives an insight, not often gained until at least thirty years after such major events, into the negotiations and the early days of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

In particular he gave a graphic account of the willingness of the Conservative government to concede much more than it did but for one check - the reaction of unionists. Fitzgerald provides us with a quotation from Mrs. Thatcher, that exposes the British Government's attitude to Northern Ireland.

"The problem was to find a way through the difficulties in a manner and at a rate that would not cause it to blow up in our faces."

Of vital importance is Fitzgerald's account of the assurances from the British Government negotiators that he It was not, and we must assume, still is not, the substance of concessions to be made to Dublin that causes difficulties for the government. They are prepared to make any concession provided it will not occasion a drastic reaction. In short anything they can get past the unionist community. It is only the method and timing of a

...that is of concern, the conclusion is acceptable to them.

The intrusion of judges from the Republic of Ireland into our Courts is revealed as a step both governments wanted to take but which was blocked mainly by the opposition of the then Lord Chief Justice Lord Lowry but the Irish were consoled by the British advising them that action here would best await the departure of Lord Lowry. Both government's willingness to embrace Joint Authority of Northern Ireland was stemmed by the fear of unionist reaction. The intention to abolish or remove the part-time element of the UDR was included in the negotiations as was the proposal to recruit separate police forces from the nationalist community to police nationalist areas. Dr. Fitzgerald boasts of his power to influence appointments to Northern Ireland's judiciary and unashamedly admits his efforts to change the composition and name of the RUC and set up an all-Ireland Law commission and an all-Ireland Police force - both of which were acceptable to the British side in the negotiations.

Of vital importance is Fitzgerald's account of the assurances from the British Government negotiators that he should consider the proposals contained in the Anglo Irish Agreement as "building blocks for future political arrangements"; they were subject to "development" or in Geoffrey Howe's terms "it would be the start of an evolving situation."

Let anyone who is critical of the caution that Dr Paisley is rightly taking, to ensure that talks advance on a proper foundation, heed those remarks. The basis upon which talks take place must not allow unionists to be sucked into constructing upon "*the building blocks*" of the Anglo Irish Agreement nor being part of a "*development*" of that undemocratic Dublin manipulated system. Nor indeed being part of Geoffrey Howe's "*evolving situation*". I might add that the autobiography shows the unionist tactic that caused the Dublin/London joint rulers most concern was the unionist protest campaign on the streets.

It seems self-evident that neither a Conservative government nor a Labour one can be trusted or expected to strengthen the Union. While they are left to govern Ulster so long will this Province be treated to creeping integration with Dublin.

The people of Northern Ireland have a right to know, from those who make the claim, what there has been in the conduct of British Governments - both Conservative and Labour - for the past twenty years to suggest that their policy towards Northern Ireland has changed or is changing.

Isn't it peculiar how events conspire from time to time to wave a stick at some of the main participants in the traumatic events of history? I wonder did it ever occur to Margaret Thatcher as she eloquently pleaded the case against European Union that she had heard that case

argued before by unionists against moves towards Irish Union? Did she ever think, when she argued that the United Kingdom was being placed on a conveyor belt towards European Union, how unionists argued that the British Government, led by herself, had put unionists on the drip-feed to a united Ireland. Did a vision of Hillsborough appear before her when she made her call for a referendum on the European issue. Did she ever remember how she had turned down the pleas of Ulster's unionist community who were given no say in the negotiations that she concluded in 1985. Of course, she is right now in all that she says concerning the potentially dire consequences of the Maastricht Summit but we were right then, as now, but in 1985 she was on the other side.

Each of us here today, during our own lifetimes, will have recognised the very substantial and significant change in the basis of the union that exists between Northern Ireland and the rest of the Kingdom. British governments have used the union as a vehicle to convey Ulster, inch by inch, into a united Ireland. I know that there are some unionists who prefer not to face up to that reality. There are even some who would attempt to forget that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is still in existence and is still being played out daily in our province. They have forgotten all the splendid things they said in 1985 - the great principles they so proudly and eloquently proclaimed. The sublime truths have faded from their hearts and the lessons of history have been forgotten.

In this struggle for the survival of unionism, if there be a man amongst us who does not think that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is destructive of the union he is misplaced and ought not to be with us. If there be a man amongst us who prefers to disregard the presence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement because of the difficulty of getting rid of it, then that man is misplaced and ought not to be with us. If there be a man amongst us who is prepared to ignore the existence of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and accept new structures alongside the Agreement, then he is misplaced and ought not to be with us. We disclaim all sympathy with him, he is not placed properly with us.

Mr Chairman, while the Anglo-Irish Agreement exists the union is in peril. The people of this province cannot allow themselves to mark time in the campaign to rid Ulster of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I recognise that there will always be the few who will only countenance acting against such betrayal if it affects their comforts and their privileges, but a people that values its privileges above its principles will soon lose both.

This party has always been and still is a **unionist** party. But it is a unionist party that will only support a union that safeguards the lives and livelihood of those it represents. It is a party that will not be content to remain in a Union that is being transformed into an arrangement, and towards a destination, that we have long abhorred. I believe our province is being edged out of the union

through the Anglo-Irish Agreement. We are drifting inexorably towards a united Ireland. All this is occurring within the union as the union presently exists. We cannot allow the union to be used as a means of oppressing the unionist people of this province. I can hear the muttering starting already in some quarters in our community. "Ah Ha", they say, "this is support for independence". It is nothing of the kind. It is the people who fiddle while Ulster burns who bring about the day when the union will be ended. It is the politician who closes his eyes to the terrible truths I have already outlined and thereby permit them to flourish who is the enemy of the union, not those who warn of the dangers. This party will not embrace Micawber unionism.

Earlier this month I ventured - using the most restrained and polite language - to oppose the notion that the Union was growing stronger every day. I did so, not to take issue with unionist colleagues, but because the tactics that unionists employ will obviously depend on whether one believes the union is getting stronger daily or is in peril. My remarks brought a fast and fierce reaction from some leading members of the Official Unionist Party. One of them, Mr. Reg "eighth count" Empey - the non-quota Belfast Councillor - responded so quickly to condemn my remarks he apparently did not notice that what he was condemning was a quotation I had used from his own party leader. Why is it when Mr Empey speaks that my mind is thrown back to the fable about an ass in

on's skin? That is the one, Mr Chairman, which tells the story of an ass that put on lion's skin but was eventually betrayed when he opened his mouth and began braying. Mr Empty's "braying" on this occasion amounted to an admission that while I was right I should not have told the electorate the truth.

Another critic, the Member of Parliament for Strangford, popped up to attack me. Indeed I would have been more concerned if he had declared himself to be on my side. It was noticeable that in the course of his attack he too was unable to counter my argument. Mr Taylor may feel that to tell the people of Northern Ireland the truth about the danger to the union implies support for the concept of an Independent Ulster.

There is an old and somewhat lugubrious adage which says: "*never speak of rope in the house of one who has been hanged*". In the same way, if I were in Mr Taylor's house, the very last word in the whole dictionary that I think I would use is the word "*Independence*". Was it not Mr Taylor who, in the early '70s advocated an Independent Ulster. Was it not Mr Taylor who allowed himself to look beyond the union to see what might lie hidden in the dark recess behind? I have with me some choice specimens of the bread that he threw upon the waters in order, I suppose, to solicit support for this policy.

on RTE radio on 16 July 1972 and said, "If it is not possible for Northern Ireland to remain within the UK with its own separate Parliament, then I would favour a negotiated independence for Ulster."

The day before John Taylor told the Belfast Newsletter: "I would prefer an independent Northern Ireland to total integration with the United Kingdom."

On 26 January 1973 he said he had "decided to make the break now". He spelt out in detail his case for an independent Ulster.

This party believes that an Independent Ulster is not an alternative to the Union. However it firmly contends that an Independent Ulster is an alternative to a United Ireland or to a mutation between Dublin Rule and Direct Rule. The task for unionists is to establish whether the union can be preserved on an acceptable basis. That is the task with which we wish Dr Paisley well and offer him our total support. There are those who may think that some tinkering with Westminster procedures would make all the difference. None of your Members of Parliament think that way.

There has been much talk of the possibility of a Northern Ireland Select Committee being set up at Westminster. To hear some people one might think that this was a major step in securing the Union for all time. Now, Mr

Chairman, I do not deem myself so competent as other gentlemen deem themselves to be to take a lead on this subject but I did trouble to speak at Westminster to the expert Officers of the House who are competent to advise on these matters. Let me tell you what this proposal entails. Select Committees are likely to have about a dozen members. The government will always retain a majority on the Committee which will leave about five places for all the opposition parties. Because of the Regional nature of this Committee it may be possible that one or even two unionists members from Northern Ireland might be in membership of the Committee. In terms of involvement, regularity of meetings and accountability to the electorate it does not hold a candle to a devolved Assembly. It would have a limited role in scrutinising the Northern Ireland Office and while even on this narrow basis it is welcome in terms of democratic accountability it does nothing to destroy the Anglo Irish Agreement nor does it strengthen the Union.

I know the motion refers to our conviction that there is no role for Dublin in Ulster's internal affairs. Yet after Dublin has been put through the "Magherafelt mincer" there is little need to do more than state this essential precept. Let us never forget our opposition to the Anglo Irish Agreement is founded upon opposition to Dublin's involvement in our internal affairs and therefore no alternative which gives Dublin an involvement in our internal affairs can be acceptable.

Nothing I have said in my address should be interpreted as a desire to end the union - far from it. It is an honest recognition of its condition which demands unionists to engage in a campaign to save the union. However, at the same time, it requires unionists, if they determine that the union cannot be preserved, to become masters of their own destiny. I say to those in this province who argue the case for an independent Ulster, why would you hazard so desperate a step while it is yet possible that the ills from which you flee can be rectified? Will you risk the commission of so fearful a mistake? At the same time, as the North Tyrone Branch have suggested, we cannot wait to determine if and whether the ultimate calamity befalls us before examining the limited number of last resort options. I have said before, and I say again, that this party is prepared to bring the country face to face with this, the living issue of our age, and demand its solution. We must determine whether the union can be rescued, and rescued on satisfactory grounds. Let us state clearly, we will go to the wall upon this issue if events demand it, but I contend that before casting off our national fabric with its benefits, its memories and its hopes and before initiating so grave a course; would it not be prudent to first ascertain whether the adverse conditions can be reversed?

I must, however ask, as North Tyrone have, a further question. Could this party regard itself as a safe counselor in the affairs of this province if - while its energy,

purpose and thoughts are primarily bent on considering how the union may best be preserved - it did not determine and analyse the available options.

I seek not to penetrate the veil. God grant that in our day, at least, that curtain may not rise! Yet when the British Government signed the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the imprisoned winds were let loose. Let not the press or others suggest, as they have in the past, that my remarks are in any way related to the forthcoming election and seeking advantage for this party. The mere success of a party means little except when the province is using a party for a substantial and significant purpose. No-one can mistake the purpose for which this province would now seek to use the Democratic Unionist Party. Our task is to save the union or - if, Heaven forbid, we cannot save it - to save our people from Dublin Rule. We are not prepared to drift into a united Ireland. This party will not be turned by the breadth of a hair from the course that we have marked for ourselves. Craven indeed is the heart that fears to perform a task so vital and so noble.

What shall history say of us? Will it say we renounced that holy trust to warn our people of the danger and attempt to avert it? Shall it say that we deserted duty and abandoned the only course that could safeguard the union? Shall it say that, called by the events of history we failed to command our people in this great commission? No Sir! When this party was formed it was not formed

