

FROM: D BROOKER
CPL DIVISION
19 JANUARY 1994

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DESK IMMEDIATE

cc PS/Michael Ancram(L,B+DENI) -B&M
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L,B&DFP) -B&M
PS/PUS(L+B) -B
PS/Mr Fell -B
Mr Legge -B
Mr Thomas -B
Mr Bell -B
Mr Watkins -B
Mr Williams -B
Mr Wood(L+B) -B
Mr Daniell -B
Mr Maccabe -B
Mr Brearley -B
Mr Caine -B
HMA Dublin -B
Mr Archer, RID -B

PS/Secretary of State(L+B) -B

COUCHMAN DEBATE - FRIDAY 21 JANUARY: SECRETARY OF STATE'S SPEECH

I attach a fresh draft of the speech, building on the points made during the Secretary of State's meeting last evening and on other comments that I have received from copy recipients.

2. The overall message is simple: that the Government has a clear and coherent policy focused on the twin objectives of a desire for peace and an agreed political settlement. The text then goes on to rehearse the key points of the Joint Declaration and the three stranded Talks process. It echoes many of the points set out in Mr Daniell's script for inclusion in the Secretary of State's speech tomorrow to the alumni of Trinity College.

3. I have not, at the time of writing it, seen the text of the Tanaiste's speech today on self determination.

(Signed)

D BROOKER

PRIVATE MEMBERS MOTION: 21 JANUARY 1994 - JAMES COUCHMAN MP

DRAFT OF 19 JANUARY

Outline speech for the Secretary of State

Introduction

1. I very much welcome this opportunity to re-state the Government's policies to the House at this early point in the New Year. I also commend the hon gentleman for his choice of subject matter; the Resolution before us raises issues which fully deserve the attention of the House.

Government Approach

2. Government policy could not be clearer. We want peace in Northern Ireland - not peace at any price but peace properly attained - and an agreed political settlement. These objectives were spelt out by my rt hon Friend the Prime Minister in the debate on the Address on 18 November when he also underlined the importance which we attach to Northern Ireland by emphasising that it is first amongst the Government's priorities.

3. These two objectives, of peace and a political settlement, are complementary; they march hand in hand. We will continue to pursue them with all vigour. In so doing, we work closely with the Irish Government who have a common interest in, and equal commitment to these matters.

4. The Resolution before us invites the House to welcome and support "the insistent demand of the people of all traditions in Northern Ireland for peace, properly attained, and asserts its abhorrence and objection of all violence, from whatever quarter, used in place of democratic persuasion".

5. To my mind, the Resolution's reference to the "insistent demand" of the people accurately captures the present mood in Northern Ireland for peace. The ordinary man in the street in Northern Ireland, in Great Britain and in the Republic has long seen that violence leads nowhere; it is wrong, inexcusable, and must be stopped now. The people are waiting - with increasing impatience - for Sinn Fein's response to the Joint Declaration. There is only one answer they want to hear - that the days of the bomb and bullet are over for good and that those who wish to seek political change in Northern Ireland will now follow the democratic path, and only the democratic path.

The Joint Declaration

6. The Joint Declaration offers an opportunity to the terrorists which, if they listen to the people, they should not hesitate to seize. But by setting out, in full public view, an agreed statement of the conditions under which the two Governments would support constitutional change, the Declaration removes any doubt that violence can somehow be justified. It cannot. The Declaration is clear for all to see; it is not open to negotiation.

7. Let me make clear that the Declaration places nobody's interests at risk. It represents the shared view of the two Governments on how to pursue peace, stability and reconciliation through agreement. It represents a balanced statement of the constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of all sections of the community in Northern Ireland - and I stress the word all. I can put it no better than Cardinal Daly who said that "The Declaration excludes no-one and pre-determines no single political or constitutional future. Nothing is excluded except the use of violence for political ends".

8. That is precisely what the two Governments intended.
9. Let me remind the House what the Declaration has to say. In so doing, I emphasise that every aspect of it is based on the irreducible requirement for agreement and consent. Looking back over the history of relationships between the different interests in Great Britain, Ireland and Northern Ireland it is plain to see that mistakes have been made. The way to prevent more mistakes in future is to stick rigorously to the requirement for agreement and consent. The Declaration is founded on those principles. I am sure that other members will have been greatly heartened, as I was, by the Taoiseach's speech to the Irish Association on 10 January which spelt out that coercion has no place in the future of Ireland.
10. The Declaration is a balanced document. It offers reassurance and support to the Unionist community by re-affirming that the British Government will uphold the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united-Ireland. The wishes of the people of Northern Ireland on this point are crucial. Elsewhere in the Declaration, the Taoiseach states that "It would be wrong to attempt to impose a united-Ireland, in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland" and he accepts, on behalf of the Irish Government, "That the democratic right of self determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland".
11. The Declaration therefore offers the key reassurance to the people of Northern Ireland that their future lies in their own hands. If there is to be a change in Northern Ireland's status then it is up to those who favour a different status to persuade the majority, peacefully and without coercion or violence, that a different status is to be preferred.

12. I reiterate today that, for as long as Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom, all its people can count on the wholehearted commitment of the British Government.

13. On the other side of the coin, to those who aspire to a sovereign and united Ireland, the Declaration restates a position which has now been on record for some time, that the British Government has no selfish/ strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland. This does not mean, as some have suggested, that the Government somehow wishes to "desert" Northern Ireland; it means that our primary interest is to see peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, established by agreement among all the people who inhabit the island.

14. The Declaration also makes it clear that we are working, and will continue to work, with the Irish Government, to achieve an agreement that commands widespread support and embraces the totality of relationships. The Declaration commits us to encourage, facilitate and enable the achievement of such an agreement over a period, through a process of dialogue and co-operation based on full respect for the rights and identities of both traditions in Ireland. We accept that such agreement, may, as of right, take the form of agreed structures for the island as a whole, including a united-Ireland achieved by peaceful means.

15. The document also makes it clear that should it become the democratic wish of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland that there be a united-Ireland, that is a matter for them and for the people of the Republic to determine without external impediment. For our part, we would introduce and support in Parliament the legislation necessary to give effect to that wish.

16. The Declaration therefore provides explicit recognition of the aspirations of both traditions in Northern Ireland. Above all else it emphasises the need for agreement and consent in devising a stable future for Northern Ireland. It specifically spells out that

- "The British Government agree that it is for the people of island of Ireland as a whole, by agreement between the two parts respectively, to exercise their right of self determination on the basis of consent, freely and concurrently given, North and South, to bring about a united Ireland, if that is their wish".

17. The Declaration is intended to enhance the prospects for peace. I believe it is a reflection of the "insistent demand" of the people for peace that the Declaration has been welcomed both within these islands and further afield. I am glad it has the support of Hon Members opposite and of the party of the Right Hon Member, the Member for Yeovil. It has attracted support from the Ulster Unionist Party, the Social Democratic and Labour Party and the Alliance Party in Northern Ireland, as well as the main political parties in the Republic. The Taoiseach has said that a poll revealed 97% support for it in the Republic.

18. This, I believe, is a reflection of the way that the two Governments have worked hard to achieve a fair and balanced basis for achieving peace in Northern Ireland, without putting any of the different interests at risk. Both Governments will stick by it, it provides a solid basis for progress towards peace and it will continue to inform the totality of relationships within these islands in the future.

19. The immediate question, however, is whether Sinn Fein will now recognise and take advantage of this clear opportunity to end the violence and enter political dialogue. As has been stated before, if Sinn Fein renounce violence - and it is clear that the

renunciation is for good - then we could engage with them in exploratory dialogue within 3 months. The purpose of that dialogue would be to -

- explore the basis upon which they would come to be admitted to an inclusive political Talks process to which the British Government is committed, but without anticipating negotiations within that process
- to exchange views on how Sinn Fein would be able, over a period, to play the same part as the current constitutional parties in the public life of Northern Ireland; and
- to examine the practical consequences of the ending of violence.

20. So the decision is theirs. It is widely expected that if Republican terrorism were to end so too would the activities of the Loyalist Paramilitaries. . These developments would create a new era for Northern Ireland, an era where opportunities, which have been denied it for the past 20 years, would once again become available.

Political Talks

21. But if there is to be long term peace and stability in Northern Ireland, and a genuine end to community divisions, there must be an agreed political settlement. The Declaration is not, itself, a political settlement but complements and underpins the Talks process. The Declaration proceeded from discussions between the two Governments within the framework of the Talks process and, by stating agreed positions on constitutional issues provides a foundation for further progress in the political Talks involving the two Governments and main constitutional parties.

22. The House will know that the Talks process, based on my predecessor's Statement of 26 March 1991, has been ongoing for nearly 3 years. The first round table talks involving my rt hon Friend the Member for the City of London and Westminster, and the four main constitutional parties, began in 1991, and the Irish Government joined the discussions the following year. Although the formal talks ended in November 1992 the process has been continuing in the shape of exploratory bilateral discussions between my hon Friend the Member for Devizes and 3 of the 4 Northern Ireland parties; there have also been regular discussions between the two Governments. My rt hon Friend the Prime Minister has held discussions with the 4 party leaders.

23. For our part, we are determined that the talks process involving all 3 sets of relationships will continue to be carried forward. The need to develop political consensus in Northern Ireland and create institutions which command support from both sides of the community, building on Northern Ireland's wider relationships with the rest of the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland, grows ever more urgent. This House knows that I have long regarded it as unsatisfactory that the Secretary of State holds so many of the reins of power in Northern Ireland, and there is growing impatience within the community for arrangements which would increase local accountability and give Northern Ireland's own political representatives a greater say in the running of the Province's affairs. It is vital that this demand does not go unheeded; there is a greater emphasis than ever on the need to make discernible progress towards agreed political arrangements.

24. In that context I very much welcome the Taoiseach's call, in a speech on 10 January, for "an early restart to the wider Talks process, in order to pursue agreement". I also support the recent comments of the Tanaiste to the effect that there can be no question of waiting for Sinn Fein; the Talks process must continue.

I have long made it clear that I ~~am~~ ^{am} ready as the right time to bring forward proposals to give focus & direction to the talks process; other of course may wish to do the same. But in any event I attach importance to developing a

25. With these thoughts in mind I am looking forward to an early discussion with the Irish Government about the agreement, reached between the Prime Minister and Taoiseach on 29 October, that the two Governments would work together on a framework to carry the process forward. Progress on that framework would be beneficial for allowing me to bring to fruition proposals to give focus and direction to new multilateral Talks, once they begin.

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26. It is worth reminding the House that although the Talks process has been in existence for some time and that progress can be frustratingly slow, a process involving the two Governments and the main Northern Ireland parties in Northern Ireland, based on a broad agenda, still offers the best hope of achieving an agreed and durable settlement which takes proper account of all the relevant interests. It has been accepted that if any accommodation is to provide a lasting settlement it must reach beyond the physical limits of Northern Ireland. None of the participants in the Talks process can make progress towards the achievement of their objectives without the involvement of the other participants. This was recognised by the formula, agreed by the participants in the statement of 26 March 1991, that nothing will be finally agreed in any Strand until everything is agreed in the Talks as a whole. That formula also offers reassurance to the participants that their positions will be safeguarded until they are in a position to assess the merits of an agreement as a whole.

27. The Government has no pre-conceptions about what the eventual outcome of the Talks process should be. We have no "blueprint". The two principles that guide our participation are an unerring commitment to abide by the democratic wishes of the Northern Ireland people and the need for consent. Our only broad criteria is that any new arrangements in Northern Ireland should be workable, likely to prove stable and durable, command widespread support, and provide an appropriate and fair role for both sides of the community. They must also take proper account of Northern Ireland's wider

relationships with the rest of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Any accommodation should also maximise the scope for co-operation between political institutions in the two parts of Ireland, in areas where their interests coincide. We would also expect it to contain an agreed understanding of the constitutional issues, *and the J-J is directly relevant to this.*

28. New arrangements, if they are to be successful, should recognise the nature of the divisions which persist in Northern Ireland. They should reflect the character, aspirations and expectations of the two principle ^{al} traditions. Each part of the community should be prepared to recognise the other, accord it parity of esteem, and recognise its validity.

29. Although the Government has no blueprint for a political settlement and rules out no outcome in advance, it is nevertheless possible, based on a hard headed assessment of the present realities, to take a view on elements unlikely to be found in an eventual settlement. *Of course others may form a different judgement and in saying this I do not mean to limit the agenda.*

30. I have made it clear previously that given the reality of Northern Ireland's current constitutional status as part of the United Kingdom and that that status will not change, except with the consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland, no one should realistically suppose that new Talks would produce, at their conclusion, agreement for the establishment of a politically united Ireland. Correspondingly, there is no prospect of an agreement precluding a politically united Ireland, if, at some future date, the public's view should change.

31. Also, it is reasonable to assume that an agreed outcome will not include arrangements for returning responsibility to local leaders which would operate on conventional lines of simple majority rule. These were not successful before, and they would not be sufficiently acceptable now.

32. Finally, while it can be envisaged that a settlement would be likely to include arrangements designed to further the many mutual interests that exist between the two parts of Ireland, it can be assumed that the outcome will not impinge upon the existing sovereign rights of either of the two Governments. Leaving aside the complex questions of practicability to which such an arrangement would give rise, the Talks will not conclude with Northern Ireland becoming subject to the joint political authority of the United Kingdom and Irish Governments because, as I interpret the present situation, such an outcome would be unacceptable to public opinion there.

33. The Talks process must therefore press forward with all urgency, based on the statement of 26 March 1991. I continue to agree with the view of the Independent Chairman, Sir Ninian Stephen, that the objectives of the process remain valid and achievable. There can be no question of allowing the momentum to drop. A seat may be left vacant for Sinn Fein but it is up to them whether or not they chose to use it. The process continues in the meantime.

Peroration

34. I warmly endorse the motion. It is time for the terrorism to stop and for the people of Northern Ireland to be given the stability and confidence they deserve by settling, once and for all, the political divisions within the community. There must be peace and agreement: why not now?