

Prime Minister

We'll have to look at the whole picture in NI Committee in October.

Ref: A093/2561

MR LYNE

trouble ahead - but I doubt ^{7/iii} ~~any~~.
a Irish Declaration will run ~~of~~ P.D.

Joint Declaration Initiative: Discussions with the Irish

The Prime Minister may want to be aware that John Chilcot and I had the second of our meetings with Dermot Nally and Sean O hUiggin about the Taoiseach's proposal of a Joint Declaration.

2. At the previous meeting, we had explained in some detail the difficulties which the present text of the proposed Declaration presented for the British, without entering into negotiation about drafting. The Irish had gone back to report to the Taoiseach.

3. On this occasion, they did not bring with them any revised words. They were intensely suspicious about what had gone on with the Unionists over the Maastricht vote and were seeking to suggest - a suggestion which we rapidly dismissed - that a Joint Declaration could give something to the Nationalists to balance whatever the Unionists got out of a closer association with the Government (eg a Select Committee on Northern Irish Affairs). The Irish hinted fairly crudely that, if such a Select Committee were set up and no substantial progress had been made on the Joint Declaration Initiative by the time that the Prime Minister next met the Taoiseach, that meeting could be pretty frosty.

4. We countered all this and also resisted a suggestion from the Irish that we should suggest words which might be acceptable to us in a Joint Declaration. We repeated that the Joint Declaration was the Taoiseach's initiative, to which we took a constructive attitude but on which we had no mandate to negotiate words. It was for the Irish to take account of the difficulties which the present text posed for us and which we had explained in great detail, and to see if they thought that words could be found which would be consistent with the United Kingdom's position and which would still persuade the Provisionals to give up the violence. So the ball continued to be in the Irish court. John Chilcot also told Nally and O hUiggin that the Northern Ireland Secretary would be making clear in a low-key way today his continuing commitment to the three stranded talks.

5. We agreed to meet again in London in early September. It is clear that the Irish will want to bring the question of the Joint Declaration to the crunch before the next bilateral meeting between the Prime Minister and Taoiseach. Equally, we are clear that it remains in our interests to play the matter long.

R.R.B.

ROBIN BUTLER

5 August 1993