

From: Roderic Lyne
Date: 7 December 1993

PRIME MINISTER

JOINT DECLARATION

I attach Robin Butler's report.

Comment

Subject to the Taoiseach accepting the points conceded by his officials (including deletion of the Irish Convention), we are in sight of agreement on the text.

I believe that the text protects our key requirements, and does not offer any obvious targets for attack by moderate Unionists (save for one point noted below). The Constitutional guarantee is included, explicitly and unequivocally. The self-determination formula is adequate ("concurrently given, North and South"). We are not joining the persuaders: no "legitimacy" or "value" of a united Ireland. The reference to persuasion in the first sentence of paragraph 7 clearly refers to the Irish persuading each other, not to the British Government. There is an Irish commitment to support proposals for change in the Irish Constitution in the event of an overall settlement.

One new, and very welcome, element is the sentence in paragraph 5 in which the Taoiseach accepts that "it would be wrong to attempt to impose a united Ireland".

The Taoiseach's officials were not totally confident that he would buy the deal which Robin describes on the Convention. They also thought that it might go

too far for him to refer to change in the Irish Constitution "which would fully reflect the principle of consent in Northern Ireland".

My reservation, which I have mentioned to Robin Butler, is over the sentence in paragraph 4 which reads: "they accept that such agreement may, as a right, take the form of agreed structures for the island as a whole, including a sovereign united Ireland". In context, this is OK. But taken out of context, by a malign DUP leader (or Charles Moore), it would not sound so good. In particular, "sovereign united Ireland" tends to leap off the page. I think that we should change this.

Procedure

We might proceed as follows:

- ✓ Sir Patrick Mayhew to circulate the text to the Ministerial group on 8 December.
- ✓ Ministerial group to meet from 0930 - 1030 on Thursday 9 December to give contingency approval to the text. Discuss the end game, including timing of the final meeting, how to handle this with Parliament; and other presentational/political aspects.
- ✓ Brief discussion immediately afterwards in Cabinet, without circulation of the draft text. Cabinet to give you authority to conclude the exercise, referring as necessary to the Ministerial group.

✓ Probably: further consultation between Sir Patrick Mayhew and Jim Molyneux on Thursday. Show him the text, so that he has no grounds for suspicion; allow him a final chance to sound the alarm if he can see any reason for this (which I doubt); but not place the burden of formal approval on him.

- Fairly brief and low-key meeting with Taoiseach in the margins of the European Council, immediately after lunch on Friday 10 December. Minimalist press line: "Further progress, but not yet able to make a final announcement."

- Launch probably between 15 and 17 December.

The Defence Secretary will not be able to attend your meeting on Thursday morning (in Brussels). Robin Butler has therefore sent him a copy of these papers, and I have asked Mr Rifkind to let you know before Thursday if he sees any serious problems.

You do not need to crawl in detail through the text tonight. You will need to do so before Thursday's meeting.

Content that we should proceed on these lines?


RODERIC LYNE