

<u>NO.</u>	<u>SIUG</u>	<u>From</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Status</u>	<u>Time</u>
<u>1</u>	<u>COMMONS ULSTER</u>	BENpau	Thu Mar 14 15:17	Wire	:52

BROOKE SETS EASTER DEADLINE FOR ULSTER TALKS

BY STEPHEN ALDERMAN, PRESS ASSOCIATION PARLIAMENTARY STAFF

NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY PETER BROOKE TODAY SET AN EASTER DEADLINE FOR ALL SIDES IN LONG-RUNNING TALKS ON THE FUTURE OF THE WAY ULSTER IS GOVERNED, TO RESPOND TO A DOCUMENT SETTING "A SOUND BASIS FOR FORMAL POLITICAL TALKS".

AFTER 14 MONTHS OF PAINSTAKING COLLECTIVE EFFORT ABOUT IMPORTANT, BUT ESSENTIAL PRELIMINARY POINTS, "THE MOMENT FOR DECISION HAS COME", HE DECLARED IN THE COMMONS AT QUESTION TIME.

MR BROOKE'S ATTEMPTS TO BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN THE IRISH GOVERNMENT AND UNIONIST LEADERS HAVE SO FAR BEEN INCONCLUSIVE.

THE SERIES OF TALKS AIMED AT FINDING A NEW ARRANGEMENT FOR THE GOVERNING OF ULSTER HAVE COME CLOSE TO FOUNDERING OVER DUBLIN'S ROLE.

IT HAS DEMANDED AN EARLY ENTRY INTO THE TALKS, BUT THE UNIONISTS HAVE INSISTED THE REPUBLIC SHOULD HAVE NO ROLE UNTIL NORTHERN

POLITICIANS HAVE FINISHED TALKING.

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