

DR. PAISLEY'S OPENING STATEMENT AT THE INTER PARTY TALKS

April 29, 1992

These talks, although a follow up to the talks which ended last year are new talks about finding an acceptable replacement of and alternative to the Anglo Irish Agreement which is a disaster for all the people of Northern Ireland.

I must first, before I come to other important topics, say a word about the security of our people and our Province. I must set out clearly what these talks cannot realistically attain. It is my firm conviction and the firm conviction of the vast majority of people of this Province, a conviction which has even been expressed by both the Prime Minister and the former Secretary of State, that these talks cannot attain the defeat of terrorism. You, sir, Mr. Chairman, on your first day in your present office are on record as stating:

"Terrorism will be defeated. We cannot tell when but the time will come when this evil will be ejected from our midst - pray God never to return....The entire government from Prime Minister downwards is committed first and foremost to the defeat and elimination of terrorism from whichever quarter from within the community it may come."

Strong words which require action to give to them the validity they deserve.

The spiral of appalling killings which is getting more and more horrendous as 1992 advances demonstrates beyond doubt that the government's security policy is not working. In the last 120 days 44 people have been killed due to the rampant terrorist situation which has been permitted to develop.

A total of 2,987 people have died in Ulster since the current violence began in 1969. 1992 is already breaking records in terms of violence inflicted on the Province in a short period of time. In the dying months of 1991 the I.R.A. strategy had reverted back to the incessant bombing of our economic, government and military targets in an attempt to weaken the resolve of our army and police and destroy the resolve of the civilian population. A total of 86 people were murdered in 1991 when the total army presence then stood at some 11,000.

Not content with the bombing of these targets the terrorists have demonstrated gruesomely their desire to murder civilians and security personnel in order to bring about their hideous objectives.

Only yesterday the Province witnessed another catastrophic blow to humanity when a young, 26-year-old mother was murdered simply because of her religious difference with that of the gunmen. Those killers yesterday acted against humanity and have no right to claim their actions on behalf of one side of the community or the other. Yesterday's and this morning's killing (details of which are not available at the moment) bring the total of civilians killed this year to 45.

Such a litany of killing and mayhem is evidence of the government's failure to deal with the terrorists. The I.R.A.'s

rate of attrition has been brought to its highest for a decade. In January of this year I presented to the then Secretary of State and Minister for security in Northern Ireland, a security document outlining certain measures which ought to be implemented immediately in order to abate the present terrorist campaign. This document was later presented to the Prime Minister. Although I have received from John Major a detailed response to this document I believe you, Mr. Chairman, and your security Minister would do well to study it once again.

Your government, Mr. Chairman, must demonstrate for the first time since Direct Rule that it is determined to stop the violence. This can only be achieved with the complete root and branch change in the security policy - from a reactive one to a pro-active one. This move would be a positive step forward. Effectively waging war against the I.R.A. will demonstrate the determination of the government to defeat the terrorist. Terrorism is increasing because the terrorist knows their means achieve their goals. The British government submitted to the men of violence when it signed the Anglo Irish Agreement. Concessions made as a consequence of violence encourage greater violence. Northern Ireland is currently reaping the whirlwind of the government's concessions to violence.

Let me now turn to the purpose of these talks.

The previous Secretary of State, Mr. Peter Brooke, who convened the first set of talks, called them off due to the intransigence of the Dublin government who refused to give to the Northern Ireland parties injury time to extend the talks beyond 10 weeks due to time that had been swallowed up discussing the less substantive matters of procedure.

The Anglo Irish Conference meeting of July 16 effectively stopped any chance the old talks had of achieving a political settlement. I said at that date that history would record what was more important, the continuation of inter party talks or the imposition of a conference meeting - the former, I believe, was the more important of the two. What benefit came to Northern Ireland from the imposition of that July Conference meeting - absolutely none!

We are today presented with an historic opportunity to begin new talks on a sound basis. That basis simply stated is to find an alternative to and a replacement of the Anglo Irish Agreement. We have before us the opportunity to reach an agreement concerning the mechanism by which this country will be politically administered.

The election campaign, which has punctuated the time between these talks and the previous talks, has given to us a very sure mandate. The majority have spoken loud and clear. Any agreement reached at these talks must be acceptable to the majority of people in Northern Ireland. Nothing forced upon us, such as the Anglo Irish Agreement has any possibility of achieving peace, stability or good neighbourliness. The philosophy behind the Anglo Irish Agreement was, reject the democratically expressed wishes of the majority and with the co-operation of London and Dublin hatch a plot to sell them like cattle upon the hoof to their traditional enemies in Dublin. It did not work, it will not work, it cannot work. That is why there is urgency required in giving serious consideration to an alternative to and a replacement of the Diktat which has plunged us into such turmoil and torment.

Some false impressions have been made concerning what the people of Ulster want. The false impressions, were

buried by the electorate. The Alliance Party told us they were the only party seeking peace. That misrepresentation has been rejected. The Alliance Party has told us the results of the election is, "as you were". The fact is the Alliance vote declined by one percent. They would obviously have liked the result to have been "as you were," it undoubtedly is not so. Peace at any price is not what the electorate want. They have seen through this ploy.

These talks cannot bring peace. If only it was that simple. They are not peace talks. These talks can at best ascertain what political structures would be acceptable to and workable by the greater number of Ulster people. They could even help foster a cordial relationship, based upon mutual respect, between the two nations who share this geographical region. This however, could only, in my view, be achieved when the Irish government unilaterally and without precondition drops their illegal claim of jurisdiction to Northern Ireland.

These talks cannot achieve peace. Neither are they a catalyst for peace. Peace can and will only be achieved when the terrorists are defeated. Only when the terrorist recognise the futility and worthlessness of their violence and it is demonstrated by force of arms, within the rule of law, that there is no room for them on any agenda.

You, Mr. Chairman, correctly stated on your first day in your new office that:

"Violence rejects democracy, as democracy rejects violence."

As the leader of the Ulster Democratic Unionist Party I

categorically state my abhorrence of terrorist violence and my determination to give to the legitimate security forces of this state my support in their fight against terrorism from whatever quarter it comes. Whether we like it or not, at this table, the main threat is from republican terrorists. Every party here has a duty to the Ulster people to give their support to the legitimate security forces. To deny them support is to deny Ulster peace and create the instability and uncertainty without which the men of violence flourish.

When I speak of support for the security forces I mean a clear and unequivocal call from all the parties represented here today to those among their voters who are eligible to join the security forces and identify themselves with the preservation of law and order.

On Monday, April 27 after the meeting between yourself and the Dublin Foreign Minister you said:

"The government would rise from the table still reaffirming that Northern Ireland would remain part of the United Kingdom as long as the majority living there wished it."

I can only surmise from these remarks, that you at least understand how the average Ulsterman feels.

Your predecessor, Mr. Chairman, on July 5, 1990 in the House of Commons stated, on the status of Northern Ireland:

"Although the Constitutional question has often seemed central to matters in Northern Ireland, I turn to it now in the hope of putting it to one side. We regard

the position as clear. Northern Ireland is part of the United Kingdom in National and International law. It is part of the United Kingdom because that is the clear wish of the majority of people of Northern Ireland. There will be no change in that status of Northern Ireland unless or until the majority of people there want it. That seems unlikely for the foreseeable future. I believe that most in this House, and I number myself among them, would wish to see the Union continue, but the principles of democracy and self-determination mean that the people of Northern Ireland must themselves be the final arbiters.

By virtue of its Constitution, the Republic of Ireland since 1937 also claimed sovereignty over Northern Ireland. We do not accept or recognise that claim, which has no basis in our law, or equally important, in International law. That claim is, I know, seen by some in Northern Ireland, and in other parts of this country, as a major stumbling block to the development of constructive relationships. I do not regard it as helpful. Nor, however, do I believe that it should be a major preoccupation - for this reason the Republic of Ireland has accepted, through the Anglo Irish Agreement, that the same status of Northern Ireland could be changed only with the consent of a majority of its

people. In short, through that binding International Treaty, it has shown that it, too, supports the right of the people of Northern Ireland to self-determination."

It hardly needs saying, but I shall say it with conviction and with strength, that even if you had not set out the parameters within which the internal relationship should be constructed as clearly as you have, my colleagues would, with force and vigour, have been contending that the internal structures to regulate political life in Northern Ireland should be firmly within the United Kingdom. We are not in any talks aimed at either debating or destroying Ulster's legally established place in the United Kingdom. With annexation in a United Ireland we will have no truck whatsoever. The Union is not negotiable. There are only three strands to these talks.

On Monday, April 27 after the conclusion of the Anglo Irish Conference meeting Mr. Andrews conceded that both governments could enter the talks with different agendas after insisting that Northern Ireland's constitutional place in the United Kingdom would have to be on the table. He said:

"We come with our agenda, they come with their agenda and we discuss both agendas and will try to arrive at some accommodation and compromise in relation to both."

He further argued that the legal basis of Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom, namely the Government of Ireland Act was on a par with the illegal, immoral and criminal claims of Articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's Constitution. This claim by Dublin's Foreign

Minister and co-Chairman of the Anglo Irish Conference is both malevolent and insulting and is entirely different from what your predecessor said on January 9, 1989 at the Bangor Chamber of Trade that the talks would,

“..be without dilution of United Kingdom sovereignty on the status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom.”

Mr. Andrews' statement also contradicts your own remarks on Monday evening. I must also put on record that in a document presented by Mr. Hume at the last party talks he quoted from an earlier S.D.L.P. position paper the following:

“the harsh reality is that whether or not [Unionists] have the academic right to a veto on Irish unity, they have it as a matter of fact based on numbers, geography and history and they have it in the exact same way as Greek or Turkish Cypriots have a factual veto on the exercise of self-determination on the island of Cyprus.”

It ought to be spelt out loud and clear that these talks are not about the altering, by one iota Northern Ireland's constitutional position within the United Kingdom. The basis of them and the preconditions have already been accepted, we are not changing from that. There will be no negotiation of the Union, the purpose of these talks is to find a settlement for the governance of Northern Ireland within the Union. Unionists are not changing. We have sought and received a mandate from the majority of Ulster people to carry out an agreed agenda. All parties to the talks, we were

informed, agreed the parameters of the talks.

The sort of institutional arrangements for and within Northern Ireland must come under consideration, debate and discussion:

- What sort of institution we must have at province-wide level
- What sort of institutions we should have at local authorities level
- What the relationship should be between a province-wide Assembly and local authorities
- What other institutions we should have in regard to education, housing, health and social services and so on (For example, do we see a future for the Boards as they presently exist in Northern Ireland?)

We must ascertain from the representative of the British government, you sir, what powers you propose would be transferred to a province-wide Assembly? Would they be the same powers that were transferred to the first Northern Ireland Assembly? What role would an Assembly have in regard to security? How would these institutions operate and how would they be financed? According to the Secretary of State's vision of these talks we should be agreeing and building such institutions - I share his view.

Following on from that we must discuss the relationship that these institutions within Northern Ireland would have with the Secretary of State, the United Kingdom government and the parliamentary system at Westminster. We would

especially have to look at whether there would be a role for the Secretary of State as arbitrator in disputes.

Keeping in mind the fact that under the old 1920 Act arrangement there were matters entirely reserved to the United Kingdom government and parliament. Therefore, we need to thrash out what way we would like to have actions under those reserved matters scrutinised in the Westminster parliamentary system including the legislative procedures concerning those matters. This must also be applied to non-transferred matters.

We must also deal with:

- The relationship between the new institutions in Northern Ireland and the European Community.
- The way representations would be made to the Community in matters that directly affect Northern Ireland.
- Representation in matters relevant to the whole of the United Kingdom which have a strong bearing on Ulster's economy.
- The protection of the individual, the safeguarding of community rights, and the forms of redress available.
- What Bill of Rights should consist of, and into what areas it should enter.

These are but a few of the matters that we must concern ourselves with and as you, Mr. Chairman, made it clear that there would be no barring of any such matters from Strand One or Strand Two, no doubt, as we get into discussions

many other issues will emerge that must be thoroughly debated and agreement sought thereon.

I think it is essential the people of Northern Ireland know that whatever the outcome may be on those matters which deal with the internal affairs of Northern Ireland they will have the opportunity to pass judgment whether they want the final package for the internal administration of Northern Ireland to be agreed, not merely by their political representative but by themselves. The power of veto on this issue must rest with the Ulster people and with the Ulster people alone. After all the Anglo Irish Agreement says that the major constitutional issues of whether Northern Ireland should be put into the Republic, that only can be dealt with by a majority vote in Northern Ireland. So the matter of the administration of Northern Ireland and its government can only be dealt with by the majority vote of the people of Northern Ireland democratically declared. No doubt considerable expert advice may be necessary to deal with these matters satisfactorily.

The people of Northern Ireland in general, and Unionist people in particular, are looking for a real change in the government of their Province. They are not interested in any cosmetic exercise or in some slight tinkering with the existing framework. There must be a real and proper change which will return to the people a real say in their government.

The British government must declare itself upon the question of what powers it would be prepared to transfer to a province-wide Assembly.

Whatever arrangements may be arrived at, the people,

not of the whole island, but of Ulster, must be the final arbiters. If they approve in a referendum a constitutional settlement then all the political parties who want to remain in business will be obliged to work the system and essentially stability will be assured.

It should not be beyond the wit of Ulster men and women to find a way to peace and prosperity constitutionally, administratively and practically. I for one, am dedicated to that way.