

**Dermot Nally
Papers**

UCDA P254/29

London 6/8/93

- Satisfy Robin Baker
Commons John Uddart?,
Unionists.
- Self-determination: inter Irish
consent
- Energy/influence
- British wishes
- past failure / European Union / etc

1. - Deal T. Frappantous
- 22nd Oct.
- Summit
- Principles / status quo:
we'd have acted!



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FORTE
HOTELS

exp. : that to accommodate
diff. positions : you not fr.
death - we not in water.

Start with cost / save : we have
not exhausted cost save. We not
need further in this situation.

S,LU of dispositions are used.

IC people: of value -

RB stand aside - from if
except for guarantee -

DAFSOLU self-determination.

Sollen justify.

IC Not perpetual in its nature

Un. not like personal rel. think
why : cause worth? pos. stability
- cycles of violence :



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~ worked - early theory.

Sobell fantastic level of abstraction.

Def. (1) Thomas

(2) Test for 2 PDC. or

(3) Keep the horse alive.

JC - Morham remain alive
t + b handed over.



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P254/29
Map
P. 2.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

PERSONAL & SECRET

Northern Ireland

Taoiseach,

Mr. O Higinn and I met Cabinet Secretary Butler and Northern Ireland Secretary Chilcot in the Cabinet Office in London on 4 August. The meeting lasted about an hour and a half and was, I think, both constructive and energetic in tone. The British obviously do not want to walk away from this process - which they said, at one point, was, in their eyes, perhaps even more important than the Round Table Talks.

Mr. O Higinn will give a fuller account of the meeting. The following were the main points:-

- (1) We discussed the implications of the "deal" with the Unionists. Both Butler and Chilcot were at pains to say that there had been no "deal". What had happened, in practice, was that because of the Unionist action, attitudes to them, in the Commons, and particularly among the Conservative Party members, were now a great deal more understanding. It was a matter of sentiment and feeling, rather than fact or reality;
- (2) We said that notwithstanding this, we could see that if certain developments took place between now and the end of the year e.g. the establishment of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland, that the perception in Ireland, and possibly elsewhere, would not be favourable; and that a considerable shadow could be thrown over the prospects for your meeting with the Prime Minister, which was, on present form, due before the end of the year. We asked that the British should give careful consideration to the question of balance on the Nationalist side, if there should be any development such as a Select Committee etc. on the Unionist side. They recalled the difficulties they had with the text on the previous occasion and we suggested that it would be useful if they could participate in the drafting of the document so as to make it suitable, from their point of view. Both Butler and Chilcot took this point on board but were reluctant to go any further without the specific instructions of the Prime Minister. They were afraid of reaction in the event that this particular process leaked. (This was not a dismissal of the process - but an understandable exercise in caution on their part). They agreed that Chilcot's deputy should discuss with Mr. O Higinn soon, in a great deal more detail, possibly even getting into the drafting, the objections they had to the text;
- (3) We emphasised that it was inconceivable that if you were to meet the Prime Minister that any document which emerged from the meeting should not have been drawn up without their participation. We asked them to bear this in mind so that if the present text were to go any further - and were possibly to emerge from a meeting between yourself and the Prime Minister - that it should be such that it had their full participation and backing. They said they would bear this point in mind when discussing the issue with the Prime Minister. Their basic line is that whatever emerges must be acceptable to the Commons, in their present mood, and should not drive the Unionists on to the streets;

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

-2-

- (4) Dealing in some detail with the Select Committee, Butler said that the establishment of the Committee would be a matter for the Commons, in which, nominally, at least, the Government would not be the sponsors. The motion, if it emerged, would be signed by numbers of backbenchers, possibly even including Labour and Liberal Party members. This was a Commons matter and would be regarded as such. Criticism of actions by the Government by another Government would be understandable and was, in fact, more or less an everyday occurrence but there would be considerable sensitivity towards criticism by another Government of actions by the Commons, as such. We said we noted the point but that what we were dealing with here could well go beyond this type of consideration;
- (5) The British said that in their approach to the problem, they would have to start with certain core considerations. These, we broadly defined as the right of self-determination of those living in Ireland (there was discussion as of the distinction between "the people of Ireland" and "the peoples of Ireland". This right of self-determination was, however, subject to the consent of the people of Northern Ireland if Irish unity were involved. Any document and any agreement would have to be built around these basic considerations. The British did not demur too strongly to this approach - though, again, it must be emphasised their approach is subject to more discussion with the Prime Minister;
- (6) Chilcot also added that any agreement or document should not be perpetual in its application. We, in turn, stressed the importance of what we were at. If we could bring peace in Ireland after twenty-three years of the current campaign, or after the seventy years since 1922, in which violence had been a feature of Northern life in every decade, then the prize was great. This really was the Taoiseach's basic objective - which he thought the Prime Minister would undoubtedly share with him. If the Prime Minister were concerned about the process, the answer always was that peace would be a supreme political achievement for him in his own country - as well as in Ireland;
- (7) We arranged that there would be a further meeting, again in London, on Friday, 10th September.

Dermot Nally
5 August, 1993.

c.c. Mr. Frank Murray, Secretary to the Government.
Mr. Sean O'Huiginn, Assistant Secretary, Department of Foreign Affairs.

SECRET

Meeting in Cabinet Office, London

4th August, 1993

1. The meeting began at 3.00 pm and lasted approximately one and a half hours. Present were Sir R. Butler, Mr. J. Chilcot, Mr. D. Nally and Mr. S. O hUiginn.
2. Sir Robin Butler recalled that at the last meeting they had looked at the draft document sent by the Taoiseach. They had applauded the objective but had expressed doubts whether the draft would fulfil that objective or could be "saleable". Their reactions had no doubt been reported back to the Taoiseach and they were waiting to hear of any further developments. They had nothing further to add on the draft itself.
3. Mr. Dermot Nally confirmed these matters had been reported fully to the Taoiseach, and also that the British attitude had been constructive rather than dismissive. The Taoiseach's view was that the objective was of such importance that we should not abandon it but rather redouble our efforts. The draft was not a Sinn Fein draft but the product of long and intensive efforts, and should be taken seriously as such. The text itself was not sacrosanct but the less the change the greater the chance of peace, and peace would transform the whole environment.
4. Nally enquired whether recent events (at Westminster) had affected matters. The Taoiseach had of course accepted the Prime Minister's assurances but there was widespread public concern that something would emerge which would be interpreted as a deal, and such perceptions would be damaging. He added as a personal comment that if anything

emerged, such as a select committee, which went in a unionist direction, it could in the wrong circumstances set relations back to the level which prevailed in the wake of the hunger strike. The present exercise might in such circumstances have an added value as a balancing gesture towards nationalists, and one which moreover brought the promise of peace. He asked the British side how they interpreted the recent events.

5. Butler said he understood the concerns. There had also been scepticism in the British press about a deal. No official had taken part in the negotiations but they had been briefed, accurately he believed, if only because any misrepresentation on the issue would be bound to be found out. The Prime Minister's statement that "nothing was asked for etc." was correct. Nothing had been needed since the Unionists were perfectly clear that if the present Government collapsed Labour would be clearly a worse prospect, as their stated policies showed. The Government had needed reassurance of unionist support - hence the contacts - but nothing more had been necessary than to remind them of realities. It was a political fact that the Government had needed unionist support but that would not recur frequently. He recalled the disproportionate role "balancing" parties could play also in Ireland.

6. Chilcot said the effect had however been to generate a tide of feeling and warm sentiment in the Conservative Party towards the unionists. Butler concurred - "a feeling of obligation but no actual obligation". Chilcot said the events had not altered HMG's view of the worthwhile nature of this present initiative or of the difficulties in practice. Butler again concurred, saying recent events "simply hadn't borne on it". He added that he saw no profit in the balance envisaged by Mally - the Government was not thinking in terms of finding something for unionists.

7. O hUiginn pointed out that a perception of a pro-unionist tilt by the British Government would give an added symbolic charge to anything done to meet the unionist agenda. There would be inevitable public pressures on the Irish Government to address what would be seen as a new British posture. Butler said that, unconnected with recent events, there could be a further move to a Select Committee in Autumn. It might emerge as a proposal of the House, in the normal way via a backbench motion, with signatures from Labour and Liberal Democrat members. O hUiginn recalled that acceptability to both communities in Northern Ireland had been mentioned in a P. Q. reply by Mr. Mayhew immediately before the Maastricht vote but omitted in a reply by Mr. Newton immediately after. The omission of what Mr. Mayhew had elsewhere referred to as a cardinal principle had been carefully noted. Mally said that Irish people, by analogy with Dail procedures, would assume such an initiative could not succeed without Government blessing. Butler said that was perception rather than reality. It was wrong to give the Committee such significance. The unionists had long campaigned for it and had been put off on grounds the three stranded talks were underway. There was a parliamentary, as opposed to a unionist, case for it. Northern Ireland was more important than say, heritage, which had a committee. The Government would not resist "à l'outrance". It was a difficult wicket to argue against. Mally again warned of the effects.
8. O hUiginn said there was a deeper question: The present initiative, whatever its details, inevitably involved grasping nettles and political risk. Had Mr. Major lost the capacity or the room for manoeuvre to do that? Chilcott said it was a "two-way bet". It might be supposed the unionists had more power of inhibition than in the last Parliament. Much had been made of Protestant alienation and despondency.

There was now a reverse flow and unionists were feeling a resurgence of confidence. This eased the question Nally had asked at the last meeting about the British capacity to influence the unionists. This could become easier as time runs on. He stressed the difference between a Select Committee and a policy initiative by the Government. Differences about intergovernmental relationships could be managed, but taking issue with the House of Commons was less retrievable. For the Irish Government to oppose the House of Commons as such would be very touchy. He hoped by Autumn the two Governments would have resumed a political agenda based on the three stranded approach and Mayhew would say something to this effect before the weekend.

9. Butler reverted to the question whether recent events made this initiative a "dead duck". No-one had suggested that to them. He felt the situation remained as before. The Government could go ahead only if the proposition was defensible and if the words were right. They would remain true to principle but hoped that within that limit a way would be found for the IRA to revert to constitutional means. Nally agreed that there might be no change but the need was even greater. The Irish side had always accepted the need for balance and if the initiative emerged in a balanced context that was only to the good. Chilcot said there were vastly different political weights attached to this initiative and a Select Committee. The former was very big indeed. Nally stressed the kudos which would be attached to achieving peace in Northern Ireland and ending the violence which had been endemic in Northern Ireland ever since its foundation. Chilcot said that it was the paramilitaries, and no-one else, who were uprooting peace. If they saw peace in a balanced context that would be a new perception.

10. Nally suggested that with Unionists' backs secured the British Government were in a position to present the declaration to them as what the British Government wished to see in place. The Irish Government wished to get people talking. They were not saying that such Talks could only end in one outcome (i. e. unity). If there were changes the British wanted in the text they should make suggestions to that effect. Chilcot said it would be essential for the text to make clear that no single outcome was inevitable.

11. Butler said that to suggest new wording went beyond their instructions. They could say what was not acceptable. They did not wish to be drawn into saying "that's better" and thereby committing the British Government to something they were still thinking very hard about. They would note the request and respond in September.

12. O'Whiggin agreed that the initiative was a major one and therefore it made sense to proceed only in a deliberate way. It was important to recall certain realities. This was not a negotiation with the Irish Government. The Taoiseach and Tanaiste were profoundly committed to trying to end a conflict which while centred in Northern Ireland weighed very heavily on our jurisdiction also. It now seemed possible, after very long and tedious explorations with intermediaries, that peace on the nationalist side was accessible in return, not for British withdrawal, but for a change in the terms of British involvement which, while significant, seemed compatible with bedrock British political and moral commitments to the unionist community. The IRA capacity for violence was very deeply dug in, mostly perhaps because of past mistakes. The IRA assumed, probably rightly, that once they slackened the bow their machine could not be mounted again. We had reluctantly concluded that devolution could probably only be an outcome, and not a motor, of peace, so we favoured a deep approach as the most

promising one. The Taciseach had worked to provide an opportunity for peace but the British had to decide for themselves whether they wanted to take it. There would be no point in just repeatedly referring the text back, like an exam-paper with a "failed" mark, as if this was a negotiation with the Irish Government. The principles the British had given us were existing positions. The draft was compatible with them all but went further. If we thought a cessation of violence could be achieved on the existing basis we would not have failed to tell them. Ultimately, if it was not worth while for the British to engage in drafting then neither was it worth while for the Irish Government to do so.

13. Butler said it was one thing for it to be the Taciseach's initiative. That was very helpful and the British Government were not exposed. Chilcot said the principles had been "bearings around the navigable channel". The Irish had, via Hume and intermediaries, a sense of the Provos psychology. The Prime Minister was not yet in a position to judge whether the approach would work. O hUiginn underlined the equal risks for the Irish Government. Mally stressed the Irish Government did not deal with the Provisionals. Any draft would have to issue from a Summit, and that meant prior joint preparation. Butler said they were comfortable with it as the Taciseach's initiative, and if necessary would not be afraid of admitting it was discussed on that basis. Once drawn into drafting however they might be accused of traducing their responsibilities and would be in a great deal more difficulty. It would be easier if the Irish side did the drafting. Chilcot said there might be a middle way. His deputy, Quentin Thomas, who worked very closely with him, including on this, would be in Dublin and could elaborate in great detail in relation to the text.

14. Q hUiginn said that further authoritative elaboration of the British position could only be helpful. However it would be misleading to think this great objective could be achieved as it were, "for free". Unless there was a willingness to revisit the dilemmas of the 1920s in an innovative way it was unlikely that this initiative could come to fruition. That required a political will on the British side without which efforts would be pointless. Chilcot felt the unionists communicated in small print, the nationalists in rhetoric and ideology. There were possibilities of matching them, but the British were not able to draft "provo-speak" or unionism. The core concepts had to be got right.

15. Nally recalled these centred around a collective Irish right to self-determination, subject to the consent of the people of Northern Ireland. Chilcot said their core was a sense of standing aside from the exercise (except for the principle of no unity without consent). Was it self-determination for the "people" or "peoples" of Ireland? Q hUiginn explained how the concept of collective self-determination was intended to bridge that issue. Chilcot said that any new arrangement should not be perpetual, but should be subject to a retest. Northern Ireland needed above all a "generations-worth of stability".

16. There followed a general discussion on the ingrained nature of republican violence, unionist attitudes, and the options for balance. Nally recalled that a Summit was scheduled before the end of the year and there would be a need to consider its outcome. Butler said they "could not jump yet". They would of course need to know before such a meeting if the Prime Ministers were likely to adopt some such text. Mr. Major would not be negotiating a text himself. It was not essential to decide the Summit was the crunch. They might want to keep hope alive. Nally said he worried about the possible atmosphere of a Summit if it took

place against an apparent tilt to unionism. O hUiginn again recalled the specific purpose of the exercise - to achieve an end of Republican violence. If the filter for the future was that developments must be welcome to the unionists neither this or much other progress would be possible, since Molyneaux was for integration and immobility and the unionists would resist any new balance. Butler said that that particular filter was not in their plan. Chilcot said Mayhew would very shortly be affirming the British Government remained attached to the three-stranded analysis.

17. After some further general discussion it was agreed a further meeting would take place in London on Friday, 10th September.

Sean O hUiginn
6 August, 1993