



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

6 December, 1993.

The Rt. Hon. Mr. John Major, MP,  
The British Prime Minister.

Dear John,

I believe we had a useful and constructive meeting on Friday, which cleared the air, but which also got down to serious discussion of a matter of the highest importance to us all, the achievement of peace. It is essential that we test the sincerity or otherwise of those who now claim to want peace, ensuring that we do this with a text which can be seen as fair and equitable by both communities.

We have had a chance to reflect over the weekend over some of the changes you have proposed. Some of them present little or no difficulty, and in our view can be incorporated either as they stand or with slight modifications, which we will suggest. Others present more substantial difficulties, but we will try where possible to suggest alternative ways of dealing with the difficulty.

Agreement and consent is the theme we have running through the entire document. Archbishop Eames said on Radio Ulster this morning that no Taoiseach had gone so far in affirming the position on this point. You will have noted other recent encouraging Unionist comments. As I said to you, the unamended text has already been found acceptable by many on the Unionist side.



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

-2-

The statement by Peter Brooke essentially initiated this entire process. To heavily qualify it would send the wrong signal completely, and would be turning the clock back.

The concept of self-determination is central, but of course must be handled carefully. I have a suggestion to add to our text, which might help overcome your difficulty. I understand that you have to make reference to the statutory guarantee. I would just put it in a slightly different place. I am quite happy if you believe it would be helpful, to restate my position about implementing constitutional change as part of an overall settlement and in the context of 'a balanced constitutional accommodation', a phrase which comes from the Government's Programme.

But the extent of the change that would be involved is a matter we would have to decide in the context of the talks process. Certainly, to announce 'withdrawal of the claim of right' would be sufficient on its own to sink this entire process, would be unacceptable to the Government, as well as causing huge domestic political difficulties for me.

I have reflected on your suggestion with regard to the Convention and the promise of British Government talks with Sinn Féin three months after a permanent cessation of violence. I am satisfied that the Convention is absolutely essential to produce a cessation of violence, although I think your suggestion about talks with



Oifig an Taoisigh  
Office of the Taoiseach

-3-

SF also has value in parallel. Apart altogether from being a waiting-room, the Convention will help educate SF to the realities, as the other democratic nationalist parties in Ireland see them. I think they need to be ushered initially into a framework, with which they feel some affinity, without prejudice to their need to conduct their own talks on many different matters with you.

I hope we will be able to make rapid progress. Two people were killed in Belfast in the last 24 hours, and, as I have often said, time is not on our side. One more death is one too many.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Taoiseach.