

H. R. Love
 Butler
 To be cleared.

From: Sir Robin Butler
 Date: 12 December 1993

PRIME MINISTER

JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE

I have seen Quentin Thomas's note of today to you, and you may like these comments.

I agree that we should not break on "as of right". Conceding its restoration should reopen the way to an agreement if the Irish are still serious about having one.

I also agree that we need to clarify with the Taoiseach what the rest of the sentence is meant to mean. Of the alternative formulations in paragraph 17 of the NIO note I much prefer the second one. The trouble about the other two is that they could raise Unionist fears about all-Ireland institutions of some indefinite sort. It is better to refer to a united Ireland (as the rest of the paragraph does) than to do that.

(Incidentally, at the end of paragraph 11 of the NIO note "security" should, I assume, read "clarity" and at the end of paragraph 13 "political right" should read "legal right".)

Tactics with the Taoiseach

There are only two real difficult points outstanding, as I see it. One is the sentence discussed above. The other is the Irish bid for restoration of paragraphs 10 and 11, and the alternative of a reference to the "forum" at the end of the alternative paragraph 10. We could trade the latter for the former

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provided that there was some explanation limiting what the forum is to do (important for reassuring the Unionists).

If you could negotiate these two things with the Taoiseach on the telephone tomorrow, the rest can easily be tidied up. One possibility is that I and the official team go to Dublin tomorrow, but since meetings with Irish officials risk raising new difficulties it may be better to do it on the telephone. Following an initial telephone conversation between you and the Taoiseach, perhaps there could be a subsequent two stage telephone call - first between Rod Lyne and Martin Mansergh and second between you and the Taoiseach to give final confirmation.

The above is predicated on the assumption that you will not want two meetings with the Taoiseach this week. If he suggests that, both would need to be in London. But a better plan, in my view, is to settle the text on the telephone with the Irish tomorrow - if they are still willing to play - and to go ahead with the Wednesday plan.

SIR ROBIN BUTLER

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