

Dermot Nally Papers

UCDA P254/10

14/6/93 1.

I NOT ON behalf - intermediaries
how - condemnation.
long? - share of costs: G/F: OPSAHL: TRIBUNE
- PEACE "informal channels of communication".

II TALKS - - structure
- likely outcome: 1920
1972
- support but blind alley - 1973
III HATS. 2 & 3 - dead horse.

IV DOCUMENT - NOT JUST SF.
- discretion.

V SALIENT FEATURES: *aykoma fary no*
1920
- British statement: long term view joint
- ALL Ireland self determination, subject
to consent of N.F.
- Generation
- IRISH convention

VI Unionists

VII WEDNESDAY.

RB

Talks - R/S: only show in
Town.

All track to account:

doc... structure not fixed:

L diff. in present form: not
practicable. Not say we
reject this because of talk process
- Unig. wd. next. Not prepared
to consider any - merits.

- ans. 13: Tom. This. Shd go

- ") Sals. agreed, Unig. cd. expect
" . demand as precondition
agreed =>

[NIO - go over ^{doc} this: not min. to get
let. Port/NIO sec. coming it, N.
disputed by 7. 20.

Seen outline before - not necessarily
change 1. 11, Ev. (12), former
difficulties. Long more more

3

advised by some of the →
betrayal: Comm. Party not a real
Lab. ? P.M. - no power to dictate
to Party.

Don. wd. be rep. by the. as a balance
- bring them out in a way not seen
before. 4) 9/12/20 you say - they wd.
take up struggle, in a way wh. wd.
make it impossible L.P.P. & T. give
up. Then Br. A. & B. S. disagree
O.S.H.

- Not lack of support p. 7. - a very
60 ... best ... extremely seriously
but not practical prop. -

As drafted ...

DN. - changed after 60 years: by step
B - Prov. not as we said before
- work by democratic means.
- say we wd. remove U.S. is
is very bad.
Rev. 1920 etc.

difficult in parts but ^{these} minor
points.

- 2 - crucians par. attributed to ^{us} ~~us~~
more difficult than before, whether
franchise of consent = 7.5 or going
from 'our' par. take into our
a recent period to provide for
new structures. \uparrow

How much of people / N &
wt. only to that part?

- * - Next collection \rightarrow list of
4. self-determination of Ireland -
NEW.

3. - join ex-persuaders. much
further the conservatives & Labour
parties have some P.O. of Ireland

4 - final sentence - There is peace &
harmony: independent H. & S
no basis.

Text.

Place here phrase. but not

4.

B - sit. today.

- 'actively persuaded.'

D.N. - P. & N.Y. had concluded
→ diff. bus.

2nd - if people of N.Y. ...

B prepare 7 - no refusal of

sheets, maintenance & so on
- can't pick up doc. ... difficulty
of interface quite substantial

- welcome & signing the
1st. wd give up armed struggle

D.N. - 500,000

- 500,000
- 7 Centuries

R.B. - by Govt. wd. the facilities of
Mn. account.

- linking NIS to prove way
- 7a - 28

5.

2.2. ●

D. N. Opahl. G. F. etc.

— B - SH?

— J. H. → streams diverge

— D. N. ⁸ Port to discuss ^{with colleagues} ~~university~~

— symposium were sheets

— recognize sheet PIR - can

work. They will give each up:

but price

— best this date: reports who
are important come away for
what and, have that report

— bus

— party.

— somehow to hope that they
will be basis.

DN - 4/ to be putted

Wednesday

Butter

[is not
used]

must

persuade

Final

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Misc.
F. 2.

ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

SECRET & PERSONAL

Meeting with Cabinet Secretary Butler - 13 June, 1993.

Taoiseach,

As arranged, I met Sir Robin Butler for approximately 1½ hours in London yesterday.

Butler said that the Prime Minister had not yet settled, with his colleagues, the line he would be taking at your meeting on Wednesday on the most recent proposals. Butler, however, felt that he would say that he was anxious to continue with the talks - these were "the only show in town".

The most recent proposals had many disadvantages but this would not rule out further consideration - and possible development - of the paper. However, he stressed that their reading was that the paper in its present form would draw a reaction from the Unionists so vehement that the Provos would have to remain in action and there just would not, in that scenario, be any hope of peace.

What follows is a more detailed account of the discussion.

I opened by saying that I was not present on behalf of the men of violence. There were no direct contacts with them by the Irish Government and what we knew was coming to us through intermediaries who were conducting the discussions and negotiation. The fact that I or anybody else was in London did not in any way take from the Government's condemnation of violence. I was there at the Taoiseach's wish because the Taoiseach saw in the most recent moves a hope of peace. That was his fundamental objective. In an atmosphere of peace, the talks would take on a new meaning and would have some hope of achieving a worthwhile objective.

The Irish Government supported the talks, fully, and would continue to do so, but this did not take from their assessment that the talks were unlikely to produce a worthwhile result. First of all, the people who were conducting the campaign of violence were not involved; and there was no guarantee that any outcome from the talks would end the violence. Secondly, the structure of the talks was almost such as to invite failure. They were marked, in the past, by a series of leaks and recriminations which were almost inevitable as the talks were structured: these seemed likely to continue and would make the negotiation almost impossible. Thirdly, on the experience of proposals which had emerged in 1920, in 1972 and in 1973, for North/South arrangements or institutions, it was likely that any outcome of the talks would be so diminutive as not to be worthwhile insofar as we were concerned. In short, it looks as if the talks, in their likely format, if they ever got off the ground, were like flogging a dead horse in a blind alley.

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On Articles 2 and 3, there was, so far as I could see, just no possibility that the Government would unilaterally move to change them.

Against this background, the document which Butler had was of considerable importance. I stressed that it was not simply the outcome of deliberations within Sinn Fein. From what we were told, the Provo Army Council was behind it as well and fully supportive. We had been told that both Sinn Fein and the Provos supported it and that they were putting it on the table as a basis for discussion between the two Governments.

The salient features of the document were explained in the note accompanying it, of which Butler had a copy. He would appreciate the magnitude of the move by Sinn Fein and the Provos represented by their recognition of the need for consent, within Northern Ireland.

The court case on the constitutionality of the Anglo-Irish Agreement had depended, in part, on the use of the word "would" rather than the word "could" in the Agreement - in reference to consent. The Provo document said that consent "must" be obtained to their "agreed Ireland". This went even further than the Agreement and, if the matter were to come before a court, the court could well say that it was unconstitutional. The Provos were, in fact, going far further, in this particular area than the Agreement or the Irish Constitution. For the first time in more than 70 years, militant republicanism was prepared to accept, formally, the principle of consent by a Northern majority as a pre-requisite of Irish unity.

Butler said that the British Government's policy was to try to get the talks resumed again. They were "the only show in town". They were willing to pursue all tracks to an accord. The structure of the talks was not fixed and could be changed according to circumstances.

The Sinn Fein document presented many difficulties in its present form and their view was that it just was not a practicable proposition. Butler was not saying that they rejected the document because of the talks process. They were saying simply that the Unionist reaction could be fierce.

In fact, their reading was that the Unionist reaction would be such that it would leave the IRA with no option but to continue with their violence - by way of self-defence - with the result that the British would have to stay in Northern Ireland to maintain some semblance of order.

On Articles 2 and 3 - the British did not expect an unilateral modification. They were quite happy with the Tánaiste's recent indication that if satisfactory agreement

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were reached, then the Unionists could expect some proportionate modification in the Articles. The Unionist demand for change as a pre-condition for talks just was not reasonable.

Experts in the Northern Ireland Office had gone over the document but Ministers together had not had a chance of considering it yet. The Prime Minister would be consulting the NIO Secretary of State in particular on it before the meeting with the Taoiseach on Wednesday. They had seen outlines of the document before and thought that it did not vary enormously from what was in the earlier version. Some aspects caused particular problems - like the references to European Union and certain difficulties of expression but these were minor points.

The crucial objection was the assertion of the collective right of "self-determination of Ireland". This, Butler said, was new and was a major problem for the British.

Next, the crucial paragraph attributing certain views to the Prime Minister was more difficult than before. This paragraph did not seem to incorporate the principle of consent but referred simply to action over an agreed period to provide for new structures.

Next, the British did not see themselves as joining the "persuaders". This was much further than the Conservative Party and, so far as he knew, the Labour Party had ever gone.

Finally, the reference to an "independent" North - and South - just had no basis. In short, the British had particular problems with paragraph 4 of the document.

At the same time, Butler said, peace was a huge prize but this would not be achieved by something which the Unionists would represent as betrayal. The Conservative Party would not accept the document and he thought the Labour Party could not accept it either. The Prime Minister at present was just in no position to dictate to his Party.

Butler went on to emphasise that the document would be represented by the Unionists as a betrayal and would bring them out onto the streets in a way not seen before. If the Provos gave up their violence, the Unionists would take up the struggle, in a way which would make it impossible for the IRA to lay down their arms. Then the British and the British Army would be involved to an even greater extent than at present.

What he was saying was not to indicate any lack of support for what the Taoiseach was proposing or arguing. They

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appreciated his intentions and goodwill and were taking what was before them extremely seriously but they just did not see it as a practical proposition, as now drafted.

I emphasised the magnitude of the change which the document represented - after 70 years of argument by republicanism that Irish unity did not depend on consent in Northern Ireland. Here they were now formally proposing that the need for consent be recognised - and would lay down their arms on that proposition. Butler said that the Provos had said before that they could not coerce Unionists into a united Ireland. He appreciated the value of their indication that they were prepared to work by democratic means but saying, as a condition of this move that the British should promote a united Ireland, is going further than had ever been done before.

I said that in 1920, the British had given express statutory recognition to a united Ireland. An early section in the Government of Ireland Act used words like "with a view to the eventual establishment of a Government and Parliament for the whole of Ireland". This was express statutory language passed by Westminster. The 1921 Treaty reflected that understanding.

In 1972, in the White Paper which preceded the Northern Ireland Constitution Act, there was a specific reference to the Irish dimension. The Constitution Act provided for a border poll. The Sunningdale Agreement, to which the two Governments were, formally, a party accepted by implication, the concept of a united Ireland.

In the 1985 Agreement, the British had, again, formally undertaken to sponsor legislation in their Parliament for a united Ireland - conditional on consent. In other words, the idea of an agreed or united Ireland permeated the entire British approach, in formal documentation, over a period in excess of 70 years. We were simply asking that this understanding or principle, be developed a little more as a condition for peace in the island. Peace was a responsibility for both Governments and, if persuasion to achieve it was necessary, then there did not seem to be any fundamental objection to the British Government acting in the role of "persuaders". The stakes were certainly high enough.

I went on to refer to the Opsahl Report which had recommended that informal discussions be opened with Sinn Fein. This approach had been backed by Garret FitzGerald in a recent article in the "Irish Times". The Taoiseach was totally committed to any means of achieving peace in the island and if

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Misc.
F.2.

SECRET

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it came about, the atmosphere for talks and reconciliation would change completely.

Butler, at this point, asked where John Hume stood in the whole process. I said that my understanding was that while he had been in on the initial talks, the streams might now be diverging and we would not be at all sure of Hume's standing in the discussions. His relationship with Sinn Fein was quite delicate. I emphasised the extraordinary reaction which would, in all likelihood occur, if, by any chance, the documents leaked and it was said that either Government had not pursued the chance for peace, with total commitment and vigour. Sinn Fein had now moved in a way which was of historic proportions: could the British not use their ingenuity - and we would try to help - to get the Unionists to make a move of similar proportions - with the prize of peace as the ultimate objective.

The time for the discussion was now nearing its end. Butler summarised the British position as follows:-

- (1) The Prime Minister would discuss the proposals with his colleagues;
- (2) He sympathised with the objectives of the document and recognised the objectives of Sinn Fein and the IRA and the conditions on which they would give up violence but the price, as indicated in the document, was too high. The Unionists would not accept it and their reaction would be worse than ever before; similarly the Conservative Party could, in all probability not accept it, in its present form.

At the same time, there was some hope that the proposals could form the basis for further consideration and discussion.

I said that the Taoiseach would probably be suggesting to the Prime Minister when they met on Wednesday, that the proposals in the document be looked at further to see if there was any way in which it could be made more acceptable. Peace was too large a prize to be let go by default.



Dermot Nally,
15 June, 1993.