

Dermot Nally Papers

UCDA P254/99

Telephone 942624

'Fano':

61 Lansdowne Park,
Knocklyon Road,
Templeogue,
Dublin 16.

Nov 97

Saturday

Dear Sir:

Returned with thanks. What a complicated mind that man has. I have studied his views and, for what it is worth, certainly agree with your comments. But if you would not mind I would like to make further comments on what he says when I have "brooded" a little about all the implications.

Hope you had a good day at golf.....

Regards

Sean [Contwell]

Telephone 242624

'Faro':

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Dublin 16.

November 26 1997

Dear Sir,

You mightn't like what I have written (attached) but for once I could write as I feel, without having to watch over my shoulder for an Editor who really does not understand the North. I hope you don't mind the frankness.

There is an urgency about these talks which I'm sure you understand better than I could ever hope to. My reading of the Provisional IRA over the years leads me to the conclusion that if the present talks don't get somewhere fast then that organisation will "resume activities", rather than allow itself to disintegrate into warring factions. And that could happen soon.....

By the way in your own paper there is a jump from 21 to 23 which I attribute to your difficulty with maths, because nothing seems to be missing.

Incidentally, the Friday golf seems to be under severe threat from the heavens.

Regards

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'Sean', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

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It was only when I sat down to write a few comments on your paper that I fully realised the difficulty of my task. Your views and suggestions come from a background of highly-informed, well thought out and long-mulled-over papers, documents, conversations and, of course, your own experience in Anglo-Irish negotiations. For example, you had obviously studied Mansergh's paper thoroughly whereas I could only infer from what you wrote just what he was getting at. This is one aspect of what I regard as the curse of confidentiality which has afflicted every Government I had anything to do with and which has prevented public appreciation of the hidden landmines on the way to a Northern settlement. In the US the "Washington Post" would have had a comparable document printed even before it had stopped circulating in Government. (I know, you don't make the rules..)

That having been said I have decided to adopt a devil's advocate approach to what you have written, and I'd like your comments -- if they're worth any comments -- preferably in writing if you have the time.

1. You rightly stress the massive implications of unity, including the costs. Why, then, does the present Government not start telling the Irish people exactly what will be in store for us if unity ever comes about. A nasty-tasting dose of economic realism might bring some stubborn facts home to people who airily call themselves nationalists. But that educational process should have started a long time ago.
2. I agree with you about the dangers associated with a 51 per cent vote for unity in the North. However, do you think Northern nationalists would accept the need for a bigger majority. And would Brits stay in the North if such a minimum majority were recorded?
3. The Commonwealth point is well taken. However since it is in effect an empty organisation with only symbolic power what could we lose by re-associating ourselves with it? I know that this would cause riots in Knocknagoshel and Belfast -- but President Mandela had no hang-ups on this issue. And it would remove one plank from the Unionists' anti-unity stance.
4. On the North-South aspect I see a weak link. If you have strong North-South bodies with executive powers you have more than bureaucratic trouble on your hands. For is it not possible that such powers would give an NI Assembly a say over our own Government? If that is the case then the only alternative I can see is regular councils of North-South ministers reaching agreed decisions and then acting separately to implement them in each jurisdiction.
5. When it comes to re-formulating Articles 2 and 3 it seems to me that at this moment in history the Unionists (and probably the British) have a right to a de jure as well as a de facto recognition of the North. Northern nationalists (and some down here) would object but surely it is the Unionist heart and mind we are chasing? I cannot remember exactly but it seems to me that this was promised in the Joint Framework Document. In any event, hasn't the de facto approach failed (cf Sunningdale and the 1985 Anglo-Irish Agreement).
6. No matter which way you play with the phraseology of Articles 2 and 3, the bottom line is still a definition of the national territory which looks like a territorial claim. Since we have accepted the principle of consent are we not being self-contradictory in using a form of words which still says that the North is really ours?
7. Articles 2 and 3, unless drastically altered, will remain a lethal weapon in the hands of the Unionists in their current battle against a unification process. More progress on this might have been made if



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successive Irish Governments had educated the Irish people out of their over-simplified approach to this part of our Constitution.. We are still talking here about securing "consent".

8. I would suggest the following wordings for Articles 2 and 3, with full awareness of the implications involved:

(1) The island of Ireland belongs to all Irish people, Nationalist and Unionist.

(2) The Irish State aspires to a sovereign, united Ireland achieved with the consent of a majority of people in each jurisdiction.

(3) In the absence of such consent the territory of the Irish State is

9. What do you think?

Seán

Brendan Merry & Partners

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