

04/03/97

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NO. 722

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TUE 04 MAR 97 17:49

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FROM : James Tansley
British Embassy
DUBLIN

DATE : 4 March 1997

CC : Mr Thomas
Mr Bell
Mr Leach
Mr Beeton
Mr Hill
Mr Maccabe
Mr Stephens
Mr Lamont, RID
Mr Holmes, No 10

Mr Brooker

POSSIBLE NEW INITIATIVE BY THE TAOISEACH

1. Wally Kirwan told me last night that the Taoiseach's current preoccupation was still the lack of progress in the All Party Talks. His thinking on ways to break the impasse had moved on since he had last seen the Ambassador (her letter to John Holmes of 20 February). He was now considering whether the time had come for the two Governments to indicate that they were prepared to go over the heads of the parties by seeking to obtain agreement on a document similar to the Frameworks through referendums, North and South.
2. Officials had managed to persuade the Taoiseach not to refer to this in his speech to the BIIPB plenary earlier in the afternoon. But he was keen to make an early announcement, not least because he had to be seen to be taking a firm stand on Northern Ireland in the run-up to the election. (Like an increasing number of commentators, Kirwan - and the rest of the Taoiseach's Office - are working on the basis that this will take place in June.)
3. If possible, the Taoiseach wanted to make a joint statement with the Prime Minister. He realised the sensitivities, but thought that the Prime Minister might agree if the statement were to issue after the announcement of the British General Election, when, in the Taoiseach's view, the Government would not have to worry about offending Unionists. Failing this, the Taoiseach was inclined to go ahead by himself.

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4. Kirwan indicated that Paddy Teahon planned to discuss the matter further with John Holmes when they next spoke.

Comment

5. Kirwan was at pains to stress that this was very much the Taoiseach's personal thinking. His advisers saw the obvious problems, and were trying to dissuade him from doing anything precipitous.

6. We look forward to seeing the record of the conversation with Paddy Teahon, if this takes place as forecast. The Ambassador will then try and have a further word with Paddy to reinforce the arguments against an ill-thought out statement before he leaves for the US.

(Signed)

A J N Tansley