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Radio Ulster News, 1.00 p.m., 22 January 1987
Interviews with Molyneaux and Paisley

Interviewer: I talked to the Unionist leader, Jim Molyneaux. I asked him first how he responded to Mr. King's offer or talks.

Mr. Molyneaux: Mr. King is really making a virtue out of necessity. It's perfectly obvious that the Conference cannot meet for 26 days at least, simply because Mr. Barry will be concentrating on getting himself re-elected. You could hardly imagine Mrs. Thatcher, for example, going off to Brussels in the middle of her general election campaign, could you?

Interviewer: And what of the offer on the basis of suspension of some aspects of the work of the Secretariat?

Mr. Molyneaux: Well, that too is inevitable. Political decisions on Secretariat proposals will be delayed for those 26 days, but I think the important thing is that the work of the Secretariat on policy papers and proposals will proceed, just as, for example, Whitehall civil servants are always busy during an election campaign drafting the Queen's speech for the opening of the new Parliament, without worrying too much about which party is going to win the election.

Interviewer: You don't see Mr. King's offer then as fulfilling your requirements for talks to begin.

Mr. Molyneaux: Oh no, it certainly does not because they are not doing this out of any express or any desire to meet Unionist requirements, it is simply because they have no other option, that's the reality of it.

Interviewer: But what Mr. King seems to have in mind or may have in mind is that once Unionists were involved in meaningful talks then the question of the operation of the Conference and of the Secretariat could be reconsidered.

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Mr. Molyneaux: Well, he could make that point clear now before we waste any more time. He could today declare that if an alternative was found, would he, and Her Majesty's Government, scrap the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Interviewer: You appear, Mr. Molyneaux, to be shifting your stance. Are you suggesting that we have gone beyond the point at which talks can begin on the basis of formal suspension of the Agreement and standing down of the Secretariat?

Mr. Molyneaux: Up to last summer, suspension of the Conference and the Secretariat might have been, possibly would have been, sufficient to enable talks to proceed, but at that time I was warning that if the Government went on defying the elected representatives of Northern Ireland mere suspension might not be enough and I personally have reached that point, did reach that point before Christmas. That was implicit in my speech at the City Hall rally.

Interviewer: So nothing short of a declaration that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is being scrapped in its entirety and in effect is being abandoned by the British Government would satisfy you.

Mr. Molyneaux: As far as I'm concerned personally, there would have to be an express recognition, clearly expressed recognition that the Dik-Tat was failing to deliver on any of the promises made on it's behalf and there would have to be a clearly expressed willingness to look at alternatives.

Interviewer: The reality surely, is that no Government is going to make such a declaration.

Mr. Molyneaux: Oh, they won't do it in the short term. They won't do it immediately. What Governments do when they feel that policies are not working, they go on pretending and claiming in public that everything is going along swimmingly and they have nothing to worry about. They face up to the fact

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themselves in their inner councils, that they are going to have to face, they are going to have to look for an alternative. It's only when sufficient pressure is applied, when they meet stubborn resistance that they then come to face to face with reality and then they start saying in the light of changed circumstances, of course, we are going to change the emphasis of the thrust of our policy etc. Those are the signals to watch out for but we haven't yet reached that. The Government hasn't yet reached that point and they haven't reached it certainly in simply trying to pretend that because it's utterly impossible for the Conference to proceed during the 26 days of intensive election campaigning in the South of Ireland as if somehow or other they have changed their stance. The reality is that they haven't. No matter who is elected in the South, the probability is that the week after the election a representative from Dublin will be there as the Joint Chairman of the Joint Authority along with Mr. King.

Interviewer: The Ulster Unionist leader Jim Molyneaux. I then turned to the DUP leader, the Reverend Ian Paisley, for his response to Mr. King's offer of talks.

Mr. Paisley: First of all, I think there's a studied insult for any British Minister to say to the people of Northern Ireland, we will now permit you to have talks about your future simply because Garret FitzGerald has called a general election in the Republic. And what is more, it is a typical Northern Ireland Office lie because in the English papers yesterday, a spokesman at Westminster was saying the Secretariat would continue to do its work even though there was to be no meetings of the Conference until the new Government was elected. Now he says certain aspects, typical of falsehoods coming again from the Northern Ireland Office, our statement is perfectly clear. Number one there needs to be a change of heart in London. There is no change of heart as I can see it. Number two the Secretariat has to go and that the work of the Conference ceases and there will be no further implementation of the Anglo-Irish

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Agreement. Now that has not been met by any offer that Mr. King is making at the present time.

Interviewer: You seem to have gone beyond the stance that you have emphasised up to now. No talks unless there is a formal suspension of meetings of the Conference and a formal standing down of the Secretariat. You have mentioned indication of a change of heart at Westminster. What would you recognise as such an indication?

Mr. Paisley: Well, the Southern Ireland Government ran into difficulty in Extradition, their part of the bargain. They are not implementing it until a year has passed, 'til the end of this year. If the British Government really are prepared to face up to what's happening in Northern Ireland, they should say now there will be no further implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement for a year and we will get down to the business of discussing with our own people, our own citizens, the future of our own province.

Interviewer: Should there be some indication of that sort of reciprocal move on the part of the British Government. You would see that as a basis on which dialogue could begin?

Mr. Paisley: Well, I think that we would need to study the situation as it arises, but if today the British Government said there will be no implementation of the Anglo-Irish, no further implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, as long as the Southern Government refuses to implement the bare reciprocal agreement on Extradition, that the Secretariat will close and that we will have round table talks to seek a replacement of and a substitution for the Agreement, then I think that there could be a response from the Unionists but only on that basis, for that would show that there was a real change of heart.

Interviewer: Is there no new territory that you see that has been now opened up that enables you now and that would make it worthwhile for you now to enter into dialogue?

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Mr. Paisley: No, because all Mr. King has done is insulted us. He has said look we have said you will have no talks, we have told you that the Anglo-Irish Agreement is going to be implemented, and then suddenly because Garret FitzGerald calls a general election, he comes and says "Oh we'll allow you to talk about your future because there is a general election in the South of Ireland". I mean it's our future we are talking about. It's nothing to do with the South of Ireland and their general election. Let them have a general election every week if they want to.

Interviewer: I think what he may have in mind though, is any opportunity at all that presents itself for dialogue, and he sees this as such an opportunity, it so happens that circumstances have produced it.

Mr. Paisley: No, no he is saying to us, we are keeping to our bargain, there will be no ceasing of the Agreement, but because, it just happens because of the election there will be no Conference meetings, here's your opportunity to talk. Let me say to Mr. King and to the British Government, until we see a change of heart, until we see a non-implementation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, until we see Maryland (sic.) closed, there will be no talks.

Interviewer: The DUP leader the Reverend Ian Paisley