



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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B.4

(Add No. 2)

Mr. Deasy: I am sorry I did not hear the beginning of that reply.

The Taoiseach: The only circumstances in which talks with Sinn Fein could be contemplated by an Irish Government would be if they rejected violence and accepted that constitutional politics are the only legitimate way to achieve, economic social and political objectives.

Mr. Deasy: My question is prompted by a report which was attributed to the Taoiseach in America in which he said he welcomed the talks between the SDLP and Sinn Fein. As Sinn Fein are a 32 County party I was wondering if he would extend his view point/initiating discussions with Sinn Fein in an effort to persuade ~~him~~ him to do exactly what he has said in his reply and that is to discontinue violence. Would the Taoiseach consider it in that light? Is it true that the Taoiseach welcomed the talks between the SDLP and Sinn Fein?

The Taoiseach: No. I do not know that I ever used those words. What I have said about the talks between the SDLP and Sinn Fein is that I accept John Hume's judgment and assessment of that situation and if he believes that something worthwhile or beneficial particularly from the point of view of cessation of violence can be achieved I would be prepared to accept his judgment in the matter. That is as far as I have ever gone on that issue. The Deputy would have to understand that there is a very great difference between John Hume as the leader of a political party in Northern Ireland having conversations and the Irish Government, as a sovereign Government, having the same type of conversations. There is an enormous difference between those two processes.

Mr. Deasy: Would that exclude any consideration of having talks with Sinn Fein ~~until~~ until they repudiate violence completely? The offer was made to the Unionists in conjunction with the talks which have taken place between the SDLP and Sinn Fein and which would indicate that there is a contradiction or a void where the supporters of the political

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organisation of Sinn Fein are concerned.

The Taoiseach: The Deputy would have to advert to a very clear distinction and that is that my invitation, or indeed the invitation of ~~any of the~~ any of the major parties in the Republic to represent the Unionist tradition would be representatives of constitutional political Unionist parties.



QUESTION NO. 2

DÁIL QUESTION addressed to the Taoiseach by  
Deputy Austin Deasy for oral answer  
on Tuesday, 3rd May 1988.

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QUESTION

To ask the Taoiseach if he is in favour of having talks with Sinn Féin leaders.

REPLY:

The only circumstances in which talks with Sinn Féin could be contemplated by an Irish Government would be if they rejected violence and accepted that constitutional politics are the only legitimate way to achieve economic, social and political objectives.



Note for Taoiseach's information.

- see separate file.
1. The Taoiseach has answered questions relating specifically to the Anglo-Irish Agreement on 2, 9 March and 26 April (U.S. visit) Dáil debates are attached. The Taoiseach's reply of 9 March in particular was a full statement of Government policy on the Agreement and Northern Ireland policy in general.
  2. During the course of his address to the Friends of Fianna Fáil in New York on 21 April, the Taoiseach said:

I would like also to re-affirm again my commitment to the views and proposals set out in the Report of the New Ireland Forum, in which all the democratic Nationalist parties North and South participated and to quote the conclusion of the Forum. "The particular structure of political unity which the Forum would wish to see established is a unitary state, achieved by agreement and consent, embracing the whole island of Ireland and providing irrevocable guarantees for the protection and preservation of both the nationalist identities."

Meetings with Sinn Féin.

3. The Taoiseach was reported in The Irish Times of Saturday, 23 April, as stating during the course of a question and answer session at Harvard University that he would accept the presence of Sinn Féin at his proposed all-party constitutional conference "on the basis that they would accept constitutional politics".
4. The previous Government decided on 20 February, 1984 that members of the Government or Ministers of State should not meet deputations which included members of Provisional Sinn Féin unless they publicly disassociated themselves from the I.R.A. campaign of violence.
5. A copy of the Taoiseach's correspondence of June, 1987 with Mr. Philip Flynn, General Secretary of the Local Government and Public Services Union is attached. Mr. Flynn was at one time a vice-President of



Provisional Sinn Féin. Following his appearance on an R.T.E. programme in May, 1987, R.T.E. stated that they understood that he was not now a member of Sinn Féin and that they did not regard Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act as applying to him. It was on this basis that the Taoiseach replied to Mr. Flynn.

6. In reply to a parliamentary question on 27 January last in relation to the Hume/Adams talks the Taoiseach said that the SDLP was an independent party and there was no question of his approval being given to the talks. The Dáil debates are attached.
7. Press cuttings, including reports of comments by the British Prime Minister on 28 April relating to the Agreement are attached.

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