



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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17 Grosvenor Place,

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*[Handwritten signatures and notes]*  
29  
cc  
29-4-88

*[Handwritten distribution list]*  
cc P.S. Tanswell  
PCW  
A-5 ; Mr Russell,  
Mr Nally,  
PSP ; Mr O'Leary  
Carroll A1  
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25 April, 1988.

Confidential - By Special Courier.

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Conversation with David Chesterton, NIO

When I spoke with David Chesterton today he brought up the subject of the Taoiseach's speeches in the United States and said that the British side is very unhappy regarding their content. When I referred to Sir Geoffrey Howe's week-end comments, Chesterton commented that I should not believe that Howe's position is shared by all within the Government. He said that the issue seems certain to arise during Prime Minister's Questions tomorrow afternoon (Tuesday) and the tone may be different from that struck by Sir Geoffrey.

Chesterton said that the Taoiseach's speeches contained no acknowledgement of the particular situation in Northern Ireland and

no acknowledgment of the joint enterprise, which is the Anglo-Irish Agreement. He said that the British are disappointed at what they see as a demonstration of the Taoiseach's lack of commitment to the Agreement.

I made the point that the Taoiseach's speeches did not contain anything totally new. He expressed similar views at the Fianna Fail Ard Fheis. While the Taoiseach had had reservations regarding the Anglo-Irish Agreement he had accepted it and the speeches which we were discussing did not indicate any change from this position. The passage in one of the speeches which expressed the view that an all round constitutional conference will ultimately be necessary to provide a lasting solution cannot be regarded as being in conflict with a commitment to the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

On a somewhat different vein, I referred to recent opinion polls which would seem to indicate a certain disillusionment among Irish public opinion regarding the fruits of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. This stems from frustration over recent events and it would have been surprising if the Taoiseach had not raised those difficulties. What is important now is to give new vitality to the Agreement and to demonstrate its value.

In the latter context I referred to the meeting in Belfast last week regarding Articles 7 and 8 of the Agreement and mentioned the fact that another meeting is planned for this week. Chesterton suggested that this week's meeting could be postponed and seemed to imply a parallel with our reluctance to arrange meetings on the extradition question when we were unhappy in relation to broader Anglo-Irish issues. At the time of writing, I understand that Wednesday's meeting has not been postponed. Hopefully, the meeting will go ahead but it seems significant that consideration has been given to the possibility of seeking a postponement.

Chesterton seemed concerned regarding the possible implications of the Taoiseach's speeches in the context of Secretary of State King's discussions with the SDLP. He suggested that the message to the SDLP would seem to be that they need not worry about making any effort to reach accommodation with the Unionists. I disagreed and also referred to the repeatedly stated willingness of the SDLP to discuss all questions.

In the context of his points regarding lack of political commitment to the Agreement on the Irish side, Chesterton, without being explicit, seemed to suggest the possibility that on the British side use could be made of the apparent lack of commitment on our side to justify to Cabinet colleagues a step-back from a more positive approach. While, as I have said, Chesterton was not explicit, I felt he was referring to Mayhew's position in the extradition area.

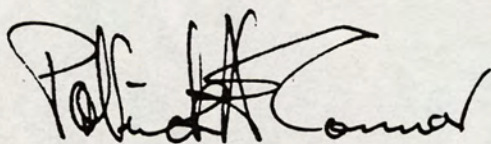
On the extradition difficulties, specifically, Chesterton referred to the recent letter from our Attorney General as being disappointing. He suggested that it is especially unfortunate that the latter part of the letter offers opinions on the position likely to be taken by a British judge or Court.

I brought up the question of Fair Employment and expressed the hope that, since "all is in the small print", the Irish side would see the "small print" in good time. Chesterton commented that they will not, of course, be able to pass us an advance copy of the White Paper but that our views will be fully taken into account in its preparation. He expressed the hope that we appreciate that they will not be able to satisfy all our demands. It is envisaged that the White Paper will not deal with all aspects of the matter and that some issues will remain open until the legislation is drafted. Indeed, Chesterton expects that a number of points will be sorted out at the Committee Stage of the bill's consideration.

?  
This doesn't show a great commitment to the spirit of the Agreement!

Regarding the question of a joint approach to the European Community regarding a contribution to the International Fund, Chesterton noted that the British side has still not got its act together. The end of April target will obviously not be met.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Patrick O'Connor". The signature is stylized with large, sweeping letters and a prominent flourish at the end.

Patrick O'Connor,  
Minister Plenipotentiary.