

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2015/89/60
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	18 December 1985
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



## ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

2.

The Taoiseach asked why, in these circumstances, Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution were so important to the unionists. Dr. Dickinson said that the problem now was that the "guarantee" such as existed, was not counterbalanced by what the rest of the Agreement contained. The way in which Northern Ireland was being governed had been changed and unionists were convinced of this. The British Prime Minister and the Secretary of State had told them that nothing had changed and that the UDR and the RUC would not be interfered with. Despite this, politicians in the South were saying that these forces would undergo change. The Taoiseach said that his Government had not attempted to put any gloss on the Agreement. All that he had said was backed up by the contents of the Agreement and by what was in the Hillsborough Communique - it had stated that the Conference would consider the application of the principle that the Armed Forces (which included the UDR) would operate only in support of the civil power so that, save in the most exceptional circumstances, there was a police presence in all operations which involved direct contact with the public. The Taoiseach said that he did not accept that there was a divergence in the presentation of the Agreement by the two Governments - they had gone to considerable lengths to avoid this in the talks leading up to the Agreement.

Dr. Simpson said that while he accepted the Taoiseach's sincerity in the matter, there did seem to be a difference of interpretation on the Irish Government's involvement in the Conference. He asked if this was in fact a consultative role. The Taoiseach responded that there was no single word to describe the Irish Government's role. There was no precedent for this type of arrangement which was an effort to cater for a situation where the minority community had been excluded from a meaningful role in Northern

## ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

3.

Ireland. Dr. Simpson enquired as to the situation which would arise if proposals of the Irish Government to the Conference were consistently rebuffed by the British. The Taoiseach said that this situation was unlikely to arise because both Governments had entered the Agreement in good faith on the basis of an agreed analysis of the problem. This analysis was based on the need to deal with the alienation of the minority community and thereby remove any basis for support for the Provisional IRA. The Taoiseach said that if the Irish Government put forward unreasonable proposals to the Conference he would hope that the British would reject them. Both Governments had a common interest in bringing an end to the violence and this was an overriding concern. The Government would not bring forward proposals which were to the detriment to the majority community. The aim of the Conference was to make determined efforts to resolve any differences between the Governments. If the goodwill broke down the situation would be playing into the hands of the IRA.

Rev. Allen asked if the secrecy surrounding the work of the Conference was necessary. It seemed that the majority was being ignored and would have no say in the matters being discussed. The Taoiseach said that he could envisage reports, on possibly an annual basis, to the Parliament, or the Parliamentary tier on the work of the Conference but in the security area, for instance, confidentiality would preclude publication of Conference discussions. The actions of the Conference would emerge either by declaration or by fact. It has to be remembered that the people of Northern Ireland were part of the United Kingdom and their Government had the right to decide how they should be governed. The Dublin Government had a responsibility to act in the face of the stated objective

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Misc.  
F. 2.

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

4.

of the IRA to establish a socialist State on the island. That organisation had to be dealt with so that they would never achieve their aims.

Dr. Simpson said that one could not overlook the fact that alienation had emerged on the unionist side. The Taoiseach acknowledged that the Agreement had had a considerable traumatic effect on the majority community. The task of the Governments now was to try to make the Agreement work and to show by results that it did not contain any threat to the majority. In response to a question from Dr. Dickinson about influencing the SDLP to get the democratic process started in Northern Ireland, the Taoiseach said that in the lead up to the Agreement they had got the full assurance of the SDLP that they would seek devolved government in Northern Ireland. This had been repeated by John Hume in the House of Commons during the Anglo-Irish Debate. The decision of the SDLP will have to be based on the course of action most likely to get devolved government and at the same time to get support away from Sinn Fein. He could say that the Party were determined to pursue devolution and there was no question of them resting on the Agreement. Dr. Dickinson said that the SDLP were not prepared to go into the Assembly and were not taking any active steps in relation to devolution. They were in fact setting up committees to link into the Conference and this seemed to suggest that they were not interested in the normal democratic process. Rev. Allen commented that the SDLP could gain more by staying out of any devolved arrangement. The Taoiseach said that the SDLP had to operate in the political context in which they found themselves. He repeated that John Hume had clearly stated the Party's willingness to talk to the unionists on arrangements for devolution with executive power-sharing.

# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

To:

From:

5.

Dr. Dickinson said that the SDLP were prepared to talk but on undemocratic terms - the unionists had already offered a number of forms of devolved government. The Taoiseach commented that the question that had to be addressed in this matter was whether it was acceptable that nationalists were to be excluded forever from a meaningful say in the affairs of Northern Ireland.

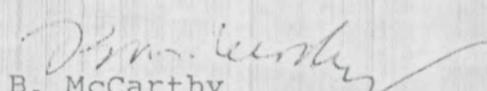
Dr. Dickinson said that his Church fully acknowledged that every section of the community in Northern Ireland must have its rights protected. The tragedy of the present situation was that while the rights of the minority were now protected the cost had been the alienation of the majority.

Rev. McDowell said that his advice to Presbyterians would be to give the Agreement a chance for, say, 6 months.

The Taoiseach said that he recognised the depth of feeling on the unionist side and the Government would be very conscious of this in the weeks ahead, both in relation to the workings of the Conference and in any discussions with the SDLP,

Rev. Allen commented that the kernel of the problem now was the attitude of the SDLP. Some of the comments by the Deputy Leader, Seamus Mallon, had been unhelpful to say the least. The problem was that people who were in the moderate camp before the Agreement were no longer moderate.

The meeting concluded at this stage because of the Taoiseach's commitments in the Dáil. He said that he would welcome an opportunity for a fuller discussion with the Church on a future occasion.

  
B. McCarthy  
18 December, 1985.

c.c. Mr. David Donoghue,  
Department of Foreign Affairs.