



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2017/4/155
Creation Dates:	3 July 1987
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of Foreign Affairs
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

A SÁID NA hÉIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 01-235 2171

TELEX: 916104

CONFIDENTIAL - By Special Bag

3 July 1987

ad
PSC
A/SO Wather &
Counsellors A.I.
A.I. Secretarial
Box.
9/23

Westminster Reaction to Unionist Report "An End to Drift"

Dear Assistant Secretary

1. Secretary of State Tom King's statement yesterday and his briefing to two groups of journalists set the trend for a cautious, polite, vaguely optimistic reaction at Westminster to the Unionist report.
2. I spoke to about ten Lobby journalists yesterday whose unanimous feeling was that the report is a radical change of direction by Unionists. This is borne out by the Times editorial today which refers to the "magnitude of the change in perceptions" and by David McKetterick in the Independent (attached) ^{who} argues that there has been a change of direction. The danger in all of this is that without really conceding or offering very much the Unionists have created the perception in London that they are being positive and forthcoming and that the ball is in the court of London, Dublin and the SDLP to respond in similar vein.
3. The Guardian and Times editorials today do advocate that the Unionist demands against the Agreement should be resisted. But in an editorial last Monday, 29 June the Times called for London to take "an imaginative interest" in powersharing government" and suggested "a generous response from constitutional nationalism".

The British Government may not expect much to follow from the Unionist talks but the Unionist report has cleverly put them on the defensive. The continuation of support in Westminster for the Agreement depends first, on the Agreement's ability to undermine support for terrorism and second, on London's partners, the Dublin and SDLP nationalists appearing to be more "white men" and morally civilized than the Unionists. There has been little perceptible progress on the first and if the Unionists can dress up the Catherwood report to look generous then it might be the nationalists who will seem to be taking the line "not an inch".

4. Of course, I may be overestimating the danger of such a Unionist victory with British public opinion. One way of reducing the likelihood of such a development would be for NIO Ministers and the SDLP to make clear at next Tuesday's (7 July) "Direct Rule" debate in

the Commons that the overdue introduction of measures in the security, judicial and employment areas will not compromise the "without prejudice" discussions with the Unionists and would represent the moral high ground of defeating extremism (Geoffrey Taylor accepted this argument from me yesterday and uses it in the Guardian). The Commons debate will be the last opportunity before Parliament recesses from 24 July to 21 October for the SDLP to regain the initiative in Westminster by demonstrating to a fairly bewildered British audience that the potential of the Agreement to undermine terrorism by promoting equality of identity has been proven in the recent elections and much more could be achieved by decisive administration.

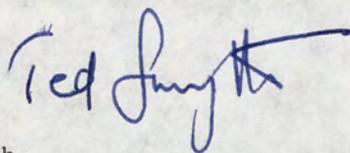
5. Des McCartan, London Editor of the Belfast Telegraph takes a more pessimistic view of the world. He believes that Unionist opposition to the Agreement is being underestimated in London and that the likely failure of the proposed round of talks will lead to turmoil which will be exploited by McCusker and Robinson to push aside Molyneaux and Paisley. Speaking to Paisley yesterday he got the feeling that Paisley was aware of such a scenario and would be keeping his distance from the round of discussions because of the likelihood of failure. Paisley also reacted violently to McCartan's assertion that the report was a face-saving means to return to Westminster. (Both Paisley and Hume may have to be in Strasbourg next week and may miss the Direct Rule debate).
6. For the record the order of business for the NI debates next Tuesday, 7 July might be as follows:-

2.30 p.m.	Questions on Education
3.15 p.m.	Questions to P.M.
3.30 p.m.	<u>Motion</u> to extend Rule under NI Act 1974. This could last until 10 p.m. If so,
10 p.m.	<u>Motion</u> for Appropriation
11.30 p.m.	NI <u>Electricity Supply</u> (Amendment) Order

1 a.m. Motion on Jury Trial Compensation. (To abolish jury trials in civil cases - this right was abolished in England and Wales in 1965).

Incidentally, the Labour Party will be voting against the Electricity Supply Order in line with their general opposition to the privatisation of energy in the UK.

Yours sincerely



Ted Smyth
Press & Information Officer

Mr Eamon O'Tuathail
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
DUBLIN 2