



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

<b>Reference Code:</b>	2017/10/76
<b>Creation Dates:</b>	22 January 1987
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	5 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Accession Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Radio Ulster Interview with Tom King

22 January, 1987

The interviewer first asked Mr. King for his reaction to the call by Addie Morrow that he initiate talks between the political parties now that there was a gap between meetings of the Conference created by the General Election in the South.

Mr. King: Well, I have a lot of sympathy with what he says. He makes a number of obviously, points. The first thing he says is that overwhelmingly the people in Northern Ireland are crying out for dialogue to take place. We made two efforts in the past which we thought had been successful at making that possible. On both occasions they were repudiated, once when Mr. Molyneaux and Mr. Paisley were, I think, ...others weren't willing to support them in an initiative and subsequently they themselves withdrew. Now we have obviously another opportunity and I suppose it is a test of good faith of whether what Unionists have said in the past, they mean, because they, as Mr. Molyneaux has said, have talked about the need for some interval, for some suspension. Now what actually is going to happen of course is that the reality of the election situation is that there will be some suspension of the Conference procedure. Obviously, depending and I won't comment at this stage, but depending on what might be the outcome of the election in the Republic the question is to what the future might bring obviously may become clearer after that election.

Interviewer: So you are saying to Unionists that they should identify this gap of a number of months in meetings of the Conference and use it, and you are prepared to facilitate them in talks.

Mr. King: I have made that absolutely clear. I make it clear again that obviously it is a new situation that has arisen and there will not be a meeting of the Conference during the election period, and possibly for a period thereafter, and in that situation if people were serious and genuine about saying that we must have some guarantee that we won't suddenly find the

Conference taking place at the same time as we are sitting down in discussions. Now they have that assurance.

Interviewer: So are you saying to the Unionists then that, in effect, because of the election in the Republic, that the agreement that the ~~operation~~ <sup>operation</sup> of the Agreement has de facto been suspended?

Mr. King: Well, this is where the sorts of muddles and difficulties arise because when you say the operation of the Agreement, I wouldn't suspend Article I of the Agreement under any circumstances. That is the assurance the Unionists have of the recognition of the Republic of the right of the majority in Northern Ireland to determine their own future. Now I don't think, I mean, if people talk very glibly about suspending the Agreement, many people actually want that suspended. I think that when people analyse their position what they are really talking about is the regular meetings of the Conference.

Interviewer: I think that <sup>they are</sup> also talking about the work of the Secretariat in Maryfield.

Mr. King: Obviously that is affected by the general election as well. That is going to be affected and that is, obviously, part of its work will effectively be suspended because of the general election period. And so, this is simply an opportunity which meets the requirements which Unionists have laid down, which they could take if they wanted to and I think the test is going to be whether they can actually answer the question that I have consistently put. You can't just say No, No, No, and do it for 14 years or more. You have to say Yes to something and of course, the worry that I have is whether they will be able to come forward to any talks and have anything to talk about.

Interviewer: Mr. King can I just be clear on one point. The outgoing Irish Prime Minister Garrett FitzGerald has said that during the election period and until a new Government is elected in the Republic, the Secretariat of Maryfield will continue to operate.

- 3 -

Mr. King: Yes, that's right. The words I used is that some of the aspects of its work will inevitably be affected because obviously the ...

Interviewer: But what aspects?

Mr. King: Well the government is fighting elections and there's a lot of day to day communication, co-operation, particularly for instance in areas such as Cross-border incidents, things on which there is intelligence or need for co-operation in that field, which are of benefit to everybody, North and South of the border. That will obviously go on. But this, the point here is that there is an opportunity here if people are willing to take it. It meets the requirements that some laid down and this could be the opportunity and I certainly should think that the point should have been made, and that Mr. Morrow has made are points that very many people in Northern Ireland would share, irrespective of that party affiliation or support. There is opportunity if people are willing to talk now to take this opportunity and to sit down and have sensible discussion.

Interviewer: And you now this morning, issue that invitation to local parties who ...

Mr. King: I shall be considering the best way in which to move forward. But the comments that I have made this morning are helpful. I hope that people who hear them will think about what I've said. Everybody only knows that I am willing to sit down and talk. Everybody, I think, also has known me now for long enough to know that I am prepared to deal fairly with anybody who has the courage to come and talk to me. Some Unionists have, but the tragedy is that people not yet in terms of the official leadership on either side felt able to do this in any serious way. I think that step must happen.

Interviewer: There I must leave it. Thank you very much indeed Mr. King.

The Secretary of State, Tom King.

COPIED MESSAGE  
IMMEDIATE MESSAGE  
CONFIDENTIAL  
DATE.....  
INITIALS.....  
22/1/87 10/8  
PS

/////  
ENDS.

9

78C  
BUIC  
22/1/87  
IMMEDIATE  
-----

TO HQ FROM BELFAST

/////  
KING INTERVIEW  
-----

FOR O TUATHAIL FROM O'CEALLAIGH

A TRANSCRIPT OF THE KING INTERVIEW ON RADIO ULSTER IS BEING SENT SEPARATELY BY FAX.

I RAISED THIS MATTER IMMEDIATELY ON HEARING THE INTERVIEW WITH THE HEAD OF THE BRITISH SIDE OF THE SECRETARIAT. I SAID I HAD NO DOUBT THAT IT WOULD CAUSE CONCERN IN DUBLIN. HE STRESSED THAT THE INTERVIEW DID NOT LEAVE ANY DOUBT ABOUT THE CONTINUED OPERATION OF THE SECRETARIAT. WHAT WAS IN KING'S MIND WAS THAT DURING THE COURSE OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN SOME SENSITIVE ISSUES, WHICH MIGHT HAVE BEEN DISCUSSED HAD THERE NOT BEEN AN ELECTION CAMPAIGN, WILL NOT NOW BE DISCUSSED. IN ADDITION BECAUSE THERE WILL BE NO MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE FOR THE DURATION OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN, AND AS KING SAID FOR PERHAPS SOMETIME THEREAFTER, THE WORKLOAD OF THE SECRETARIAT - PREPARATION OF CONFERENCES - WILL BE REDUCED.

IN ADDITION ELLIOTT SAID THAT KING'S INTENTION WAS TO SAY THAT THERE IS NOW A WINDOW OF OPPORTUNITY FOR UNIONISTS TO TALK IF ALL THEY ARE CONCERNED ABOUT IS A PERIOD WHEN THERE WOULD BE NO MEETINGS OF THE CONFERENCE, THAT IS, HE DID NOT SAY THAT THE SECRETARIAT WOULD BE SUSPENDED. /p

MY UNDERSTANDING IS THAT THE MINISTER INTENDS TO TALK TO KING TODAY ON THE TELEPHONE ABOUT TWO PARTICULAR MATTERS. THIS CONVERSATION, IN ELLIOTT'S VIEW WOULD PROVIDE THE MINISTER WITH AN OPPORTUNITY TO RAISE THE INTERVIEW WITH KING AND TO STRESS THAT THERE IS NO QUESTION OF THE SECRETARIAT ABANDONING ITS ROLE IN ANY SERIOUS WAY BETWEEN NOW AND THE FORMATION OF A NEW GOVERNMENT IN DUBLIN. THE MINISTER MIGHT ALSO WISH TO ASK KING TO MAKE A STATEMENT CORRECTING ANY

INTERPRETATIONS WHICH HAVE ARISEN WHICH HAVE HAD THE EFFECT OF INDICATING THAT THE WORK OF THE SECRETARIAT WILL BE SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED.

/////

2320

93720B ESTR EI  
747282 AISECT G