



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Press Analysis of Published Unionist Comment  
week ending 14 August 1987

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Talks about Talks

The second meeting in the "talks about talks" series between Mr. James Molyneaux of the OUP and Dr. Ian Paisley of the DUP and officials of the NIO was held in London on 11 August. The talks with Sir Ken Bloomfield and Sir Robert Andrew lasted for two hours, though a spokesman afterwards stressed that no significance should be attached to the length of the meeting (the first lasted a mere 20 minutes). The NIO statement simply said that "exploratory discussions are continuing. A further meeting will take place later this month". The NIO's caution is particularly moot since Paisley reiterated on the eve of the meeting that negotiations with the British Government would be possible only "if the Dublin-London deal was suspended and Maryfield ceased its operations".

Archbishop Eames' Initiative

DUP leader Ian Paisley has rejected Dr. Robin Eames' invitation to the four constitutional party leaders to informal talks. James Molyneaux, John Hume and John Cusnahan had already accepted, apparently sometime earlier this summer. "For the four leaders", commented Paisley, "to sit down, presided over by the Archbishop and have a cosy chat with no agenda....is not going to help the matter whatsoever. And I personally don't think that we need the Archbishop to do that". Furthermore, he thought it "unwise" to have such a get-together at a time when he and Molyneaux were engaged in exploratory talks with the NIO.

"Secret talks" between Unionists, SDLP and NIO

Newspapers continue to run articles on the extent of secret contact between Unionists and prominent members of the SDLP in

the company of assorted NIO officials. Sean Farren of the SDLP said such contact was very informal and made in all kinds of circumstances. Unionist sources, reported the Newsletter on 12 August, were not aware of the contacts, but David McNarry of the Charter Group described this as "inconceivable". On 14 August, the Newsletter reported McNarry's view that informal inter-party talks were on the increase because Unionists were not convinced of Molyneaux's willingness or ability to deliver devolved government. Molyneaux, he said, wanted an Airey Neave solution whereby a regional council would have only administrative power. The Newsletter editorial commented that "the two leaders should be allowed to follow their present course to its conclusion without the added complications likely to result from attempts to open up other channels of communication".

#### Interview with Molyneaux

The Newsletter of 10 August carried a lengthy interview with the OUP leader in which he reiterated that political progress could only take place when an alternative to the Anglo-Irish Agreement is negotiated between the British Government and the Unionist leadership. The new agreement would not be negotiated "within the present framework of the present Dublin accord" and would in fact "supercede" the present one. Once in place, it "would open the political doors to possible forms of government for the Province, one of which was some form of devolved administration such as a regional council based at Stormont". He would not be drawn on his "shopping list" of any of the possible alternatives. "The list won't be produced until....we see if the two Governments are going to take a sensible road", he said. There was no time-limit on the duration of the talks, merely that "even preliminary talks should not drift on endlessly, or negotiations drag on without any objective".

As for Dublin's role in any of the alternatives he envisaged, Molyneaux suggested that it "would be along the lines of proposals we suggested long before the Agreement was signed.

These provided for improvement in relations between the two nations in the British Isles, which is not different from what Charles Haughey referred to in his totality of relationships remarks".

He thought it would not be difficult - "the stroke of a pen" - to bring back the 1986 Assembly. It was something which did not involve Dublin.



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