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ROINN AN TAOISIGH

Uimhir.....

TO: Paddy Teahon
c.c. Seán Donlon
Wally Kirwan

FROM: Taoiseach

*Wally Kirwan
for news files.
in Crittice
for your files
(we had previously
dealt with this) why
2-3-87*

This note relates to the possible content of a statement that I might make with the British Prime Minister in respect of the prospects for the talks in Belfast after a British General Election. It could run as follows:-

"The two Governments have placed the Framework Document on the table for consideration in the talks. Other parties to the talks will have other proposals for dealing with the range of issues covered in this comprehensive document, and with other measures that can be adopted to achieve parity of esteem and reconciliation within Northern Ireland.

The two Governments are anxious to move forward, with due speed, to the consideration of these issues. These issues must be considered in a three stranded context i.e. internally within Northern Ireland, on a north/south basis and between Britain and Ireland.

Todate the Belfast talks have not moved on to the point of discussing these relationships in the three strands. This is because of disagreements between the parties as to the basis for participation in three strand discussions. These disagreements centre around the issue of when arms held by paramilitary organisations should be decommissioned. Various formula have been put forward for considering the

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issue of decommissioning, but, so far, none of the proposals have had the requisite support of all the parties.

The issue of decommissioning has relevance in the context of possible Sinn Féin participation in the talks. But, as the IRA campaign has resumed and shows little sign of ceasing, this is becoming an increasingly academic question. The two Governments would not wish an academic matter to be an obstacle for serious discussion between representatives of the two communities on the issues necessary to achieve parity of esteem within a three stranded context of talks.

The Government have agreed that talks will resume within two weeks after the date of a General Election in the United Kingdom.

There will be a General Election in the Republic of Ireland at some point during 1997, but no adjournment of the talks will be required to facilitate that event. The talks will continue as normal, with Ministerial or official representation from the Irish Government in attendance.

Within six weeks after the resumption of the talks after the UK General Election, the two Governments will jointly take stock of the position. A summit meeting between the Taoiseach and the Prime Minister will be organised for the purpose.

At that meeting consideration will be given to ways of moving the talks forward into the three stranded discussion, if that event has not already occurred at that stage.

The Governments will, at that time, consider a scenario along the following lines.

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1. Higher weight will be given to the views of parties who are in the talks than to those of parties who for any reason have excluded themselves from the talks.
2. Higher weight will be given to the views of parties who have reached agreement with other parties, especially if this agreement goes across the conventional divide, than to the views of parties who are unable to reach agreement.

Using this criteria for discerning the greatest basis for agreement, the Governments will then decide on specific proposals to put to the participants in the talks. There will be a period of consultation with these participants lasting approximately a month thereafter.

Following that consultation, the Governments will then decide whether they should make decisions on proposals which, in the view of the Governments, command sufficient measure of support. If this were done, these proposals would then be put in a referendum for approval to the people of Northern Ireland. There will be a parallel referendum in the Republic of Ireland.

It is recognised that these Government proposals may not represent a final accommodation in regard to all of the issues in dispute between the communities in Northern Ireland. Further matters both as to aspirations and as to proposals for constitutional change, will not be ruled out by any proposal that may be made in the above outlined fashion.

The Governments would hope that it will not be necessary for them to use the method described above to break the

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current impasse in the talks. It would be infinitely preferable if the parties themselves, using existing procedures could find a basis for further progress. The Governments will be doing everything in the meantime to assist them to reach an agreement of their own which the Governments can accept. This would be better than any external acceleration of the process by the two Governments of the kind outlined in this paper".

The above scenario is one that I feel we need to put on the table now. Probably the best approach would be to put it to the British Prime Minister in the form of a letter or Aide Memoire sent by me personally to him.

Obviously the British will only agree with part of this. In the event that they do not agree with the entire of it, it is open to me to publish my own proposals for further movement. In other words we could accept whatever they agree to, but say that in the aftermath of an election, an Irish Government would be looking for the steps outlined in my paper to be taken after the election to move things forward. The third possible use of the proposal is in the exercise currently being undertaken by Dr. Gerry Boyle on my behalf. It provides a matter for that exercise.

Mr. Gerry J. Shaw
12 February, 1997.