

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

cc PC
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Prime Minister

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CSP

4/2. 4th

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Dear Charles,

Thank you for your letter of 9 January about the lunch with NI opinion formers which was originally scheduled for 15 January. ... The lunch has been re-arranged for 5 February and I attach a speaking note for the Prime Minister's use. This seeks to show that the Prime Minister understands why Unionists feel so hurt (or worse) about the Agreement; to correct some misunderstandings; but above all to emphasise the benefits of the Agreement from a Unionist standpoint.

As for the background to the lunch there is nothing to add to my letter of 17 December, which contains a list of those attending and the purpose of the meeting.

The Secretary of State would be grateful if the Prime Minister and he could have a few minutes before the lunch so that he can bring her up to date on current developments.

Yours Sincerely
Neil Ward

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SPEAKING NOTE FOR USE WITH MODERATE UNIONISTS

I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you as a group of those who represent the Unionist tradition. I hope I can persuade those of you who have doubts that the Agreement is not a threat to the Union and is in the best interests of all the people of Northern Ireland, including Unionists. I am heartened that, with one or two sad exceptions, the Unionist community has acted responsibly and remains committed to constitutional methods of protest. Anything else risks seriously damaging the Union and Ulster.

The Agreement

I understand why Unionists feel so strongly about aspects of the Agreement (notably the presence of an Irish Minister (and civil servants) involved openly in Northern Ireland affairs via the Intergovernmental Conference). But there is nothing sinister - no move to a united Ireland - in the Agreement we entered into and we shall make it work. We believe that it is an opportunity to make progress towards the greater peace and stability that we all wish for Northern Ireland. There are three features of the Agreement which we hope contribute to that end:

- (a) both Governments have agreed that there will be no change in the present status of Northern Ireland without the freely given consent of the majority of its inhabitants; and both Governments recognise that such consent does not at present exist. This commitment is contained for the first time in a binding international Agreement. This is the most formal commitment by the Republic to the principle of consent and should be welcomed by Unionists in Northern Ireland. It will bind

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all Governments of the Republic unless they repudiate the Agreement. We have also made it clear, that as long as a majority in Northern Ireland wish to remain in the United Kingdom, we want them to remain. The Agreement can therefore be looked at as reinforcing the statutory guarantee.

- (b) Second the Agreement provides for enhanced security cooperation. The Intergovernmental Conference has met three times (most recently on 10 January), and has discussed security cooperation. The Irish have informed us that the Garda have been strengthened in border areas. We are determined to improve security cooperation and will use the Agreement unremittingly to that end. The large arms find in the Republic on 26 January was most encouraging. We look for more successes of this kind.
- (c) Third by listening to Irish Government views on those matters of particular concern to the minority we hope that they will be able to give greater support to the institutions of Northern Ireland. We also hope it will lead to greater reconciliation between the two communities in Northern Ireland, if the minority viewpoint is seen to be taken into account. There is no question of the Government giving undue weight to the views of the Republic. We do not in any way intend to cease paying close attention to the views of Unionists which are expressed to us through many channels (although it is difficult to do so, so long as they refuse to talk to the Government). Nor does the IC have any executive authority.

We intend to keep both Parliament and the people of Northern

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Ireland informed of developments in the Conference as far as we can and wish to have their views. We have issued statements after each meeting because a Conference which was cloaked in secrecy could be damaging. But clearly certain security matters must remain confidential.

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Devolution

The Government remain committed to devolution. Nothing in the Agreement precludes devolution - indeed both Governments support devolution on a basis which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community. The Intergovernmental Conference will cease to be concerned with any matter that becomes the responsibility of a devolved government - although it will not vanish with devolution. We look to both sides of the community in Northern Ireland to help find a devolved government on this basis. Your support on the Unionist side could be invaluable.

The By-elections

We recognise that many of those who voted for Unionist candidates were apprehensive about the Agreement. Many misunderstandings are current which the Government will seek to dispel by working for a wider recognition of the benefits which the Intergovernmental Conference should provide over the coming months. The by-elections also produced a notable swing in the nationalist vote from Sinn Fein to the SDLP. That is a success for constitutional politics and a set-back for terrorism. Now the elections are over, the Agreement must be shown to bring benefits to both parts of the community and we shall be encouraging the SDLP to play their part also.

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Conclusion

It is not just nationalists (or the Republic) who benefit from the Agreement. There is a lot in it for Unionists to which they cannot reasonably go on saying 'no'. You can help in explaining this.

But the Agreement will also take time to work. I hope Unionists, with your help, will use this period to think more positively about the kind of future they want in partnership with nationalists, and come to accept the opportunity the new arrangements present for a more settled - and therefore more prosperous - future in Northern Ireland. There is no going back.

Postscript on Paisley-Molyneaux Statement of 28 January:

Paisley and Molyneaux were wrong to claim: either that the Agreement established joint authority of any kind, or that it had created instability. This was, on the contrary, fostered by intemperate misrepresentations of the Agreement.

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JOINT STATEMENT FROM JIM MOLYNEAUX AND IAN PAISLEY.

The Anglo Irish Agreement puts Northern Ireland under a system of government which for all practical purposes is joint authority between London and Dublin.

If the Agreement is permitted to take root then the end of the Union lies ahead.

As the Agreement thus changed the status of Northern Ireland and the Government refused to consult the people of Ulster about these drastic changes in Ulster's constitutional position, all the Unionist Members of Parliament resigned their seats to give the electorate an opportunity to vote for or against the Agreement. Four hundred and nineteen thousand voters said "No". The voting was four to one against the Agreement.

As Members of Parliament we are prepared to play a full part in the campaign to rid Ulster of Dublin interference, but in view of the instability created in Northern Ireland by the Agreement it would be inappropriate to expect the Unionist Members of Parliament to neglect the Province and revert to the normal range of Parliamentary activity which pertained before the Agreement was made.

If the Agreement continues to be implemented, Unionist Members could not in all conscience provide, by normal House of Commons practice, a veneer of democracy to the form of joint authority which the Agreement establishes.

Now that the Prime Minister has indicated a willingness to meet with Unionist leaders, we are prepared to enter into talks with her to ensure that the rights and status of our people may be restored. If she indicates a willingness to consider an alternative to, and a replacement of, the Anglo Irish Agreement, then Unionist co-operation will, as always, be forthcoming.

We shall keep our position in Parliament under review and if circumstances now unforeseen dictate an alteration in strategy we shall decide accordingly.

