

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2009/135/702
Creation Date(s):	7 December 1979
Extent and medium:	21 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Mr. F. Murray (on return)
Returned until
11th
Baird

E. MURRAY

Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571

Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800

PRESS CONFERENCE FRIDAY 7 DECEMBER 1979

.... policy on Northern Ireland?

Fianna Fail policy on Northern Ireland has been quite clearly enunciated in the 1975 declaration by the party and that will remain our policy. There may be, perhaps, differences of emphasis on particular aspects. I am of northern extraction myself. My people have been around the province of Ulster for perhaps about 5,000 years now. There will be, I think, perhaps aspects of the Northern cultural scene with which I might be more familiar with than Jack Lynch. As you all know, he was very much a Corkman. But, subject to that different level of emphasis here and there, the thrust of our policy will be the same... the reunification of our country by peaceful means... the bringing together of the traditions in the country... and the pursuance of the aim of unifying the Irish people.

Q Do you favour agreement of British withdrawal from Northern Ireland?

The Fianna Fail 1975 document is quite specific in that matter and I suggest perhaps that it hasn't been as closely read as it should have been. It begins with a declaration that we want to bring about the unification of the country by peaceful means. We abhor violence. We condemn violence, and then it goes on to say that, towards this end, we would like the British to enter into a commitment to disengage from Northern Ireland ... from this country.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísí Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY TWO/...

Q Would you accept the recent security arrangements agreed with Mrs. Thatcher and your predecessor Mr. Lynch about the Border and so on...?

The security arrangements which have been in existence will be maintained.

Q Could you state unequivocally what is your attitude to the Provisional IRA?

I condemn the Provisional IRA and all their activities. I want to make it clear that I have never done anything else.

Q You have not previously condemned the Provisional IRA. This is the first time today, in two years, that you have condemned them.

It is the first time that I have been asked in this position. Up to now the responsibility for making Fianna Fail party statements in these matters belonged to another.

Q You are regarded as a high green Tory and a man to be feared by the Unionists in Northern Ireland. Do you take any pleasure in that?

I am not a Tory. I probably am tinged with green alright, but I think a lot of my unionist friends in the North are too.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY THREE/...

Q What is your feeling about the pursuit of terrorists across the Border to the south?

I believe very strongly that our Army and Garda Síochána are totally capable of dealing with security matters in so far as the territory of this state is concerned.

Q Does that mean then that you would not support the idea of helicopter overflights from the North to the South in pursuit of terrorists?

Only with permission.

Q Would that permission be granted in normal circumstances?

It would depend on the circumstances. Let me make it absolutely clear that I believe that the responsibility for the preservation of peace and security within the territory of this State belongs to the Gardai and the Army of this country.

Q Could you give us your priorities on taking over this administration?

I would regard the peaceful unification of the people of Ireland as my primary political priority. Naturally, allied with that, I have a clear priority to promote the economic development of the country in every way - to provide the best possible social welfare arrangements for our people and in relation to specifics, I believe that dealing with energy is going to be a top priority of the reformed Fianna Fáil government.

Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571

Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800

HAUGHEY FOUR/...

Q — What remedies will you have to give a boost and get the Irish economy back on the right road again?

I would rather not deal with plans this evening because that is a matter for Government.

Q What are your plans in relation to the composition of your Cabinet. There are suggestions that there will be major changes. Would you anticipate those?

I will not answer that question. That is a matter entirely for myself.

Q ...White Paper due out next week. Will you be allowing it to go ahead?

Yes. I participated in the formulation of that White Paper.

Q Have you made any commitments about Cabinet positions in the course of the past few days?

Do you really expect me to tell you.

Q On Northern Ireland again, what's your attitude to the Humphrey Atkins document which is at present the subject of discussions there?

..it has already been shown to be inadequate.

Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571

Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800

HAUGHEY FIVE/...

Q In what respects?

I don't intend to deal with that at the moment. That is still the responsibility of Jack Lynch as Taoiseach and Michael O'Kennedy, Foreign Affairs. They have outlined our position on that... and there is unanimous agreement on that.

Q What is your attitude to power sharing and the Irish dimension?

The 1975 Fianna Fail policy document clearly indicates that, pending the withdrawal or disengagement of Britain from Irish affairs, we should pursue the peaceful coming together of the communities by means of interim institutions - any such interim institutions being welcome.

Q Before agreeing to such interim institutions, will you be demanding a British commitment - in other words, which comes first?

I am not going to spell out policy at this stage. Policy will be a matter for the new Government - Taoiseach, Minister for Foreign Affairs, cabinet colleagues. You will forgive me this afternoon for just dealing with attitudes, approaches and thinking.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísí Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY EIGHT/...

- Q What is the possibility of structural changes.
Apart from the question of personal changes, might
you change the responsibility of ministers?

Yes. And we will certainly have legislative changes.

- Q What about the internal position of Fianna Fail.
— Although elected, there is obviously a very large
body of people in the party - deputies - who preferred
somebody else. How do you bind the party together?

That will be one of my major tasks. It will call
for a great deal of my time. I am heartened, very
considerably heartened and encouraged by the
co-operation of my colleagues, particularly as I
mentioned today, of my old school friend, George
Colley, who was my opponent in the election. It's
quite clear that the party is equally divided between
us as to which of us they regard as better fitted to
the leadership. But this particular contest and I
think most of my colleagues here will bear this out,
was one of the most intense electoral contests I
have ever participated in - but it was the most
friendly - there was no element of personalities.
We had a very close and intense contest but it was
carried through with the maximum of goodwill.
I wish you had seen us this morning at our party
meeting where you would have seen the very efficient
proceedings carried through with the maximum of goodwill.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY SIX/...

- Q Will you be asking for an immediate meeting with Mrs. Thatcher to discuss the question of Northern Ireland - as soon as you take over as Taoiseach?

I have no such plans.

- Q Wouldn't it fit in with your plans for the reunification of Ireland and British withdrawal?

It would obviously be of importance that I and the British Prime Minister, or any of my cabinet colleagues should maintain the greatest possible level of contact with our British colleagues.

- Q Will you be maintaining overall responsibility in particular for the Government's Northern policy?

I shall be telling you all that on Tuesday. I shall be announcing that on Tuesday, along with the formation of the Government.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísí Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY NINE/...

- Q Wasn't it true that the contest drew a definite line between the members of the Government and the back-benchers? (another question - inaudible)

As soon as this conference is over, I am going to the Taoiseach's office where I intend to have a briefing session with him and that will be of enormous benefit and assistance to me.

Further questions in Irish followed:

- Q You mentioned the support which Mr. Colley expressed for you this morning. Will Mr. Colley be a member of your Government?

That is a matter to be decided. I can't make any comment and I think you know the precedent and the protocol to be involved in these matters. It would be very inappropriate of me to make any statement as to who will or will not be in the Government. We're a Fianna Fail government and we're all great friends.

- Q Will you be inviting Mr. Neil Blaney back into the party?

That's entirely a matter for the party and there's nothing on that on the agenda at the moment..... there's no question of inviting people into Fianna Fail - people join Fianna Fail in the normal procedure.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY TEN/...

Q Will you be talking to Mr. Blaney?

I always talk to Mr. Blaney. I talk to all my parliamentary colleagues in this House.

Q Will you be meeting the SDLP or any of the other political parties in the North?

I have met the SDLP on many occasions. Many of them are close friends of mine. I will keep up my contacts with them certainly.

Q Frank Cluskey of the Labour Party has refused, in a statement, to extend to you what he calls the normal courtesies to a Taoiseach designate and he says that your political philosophy is anathema to the Irish people. How do you answer him?

I don't intend to. Dr. John O'Connell has extended his warm congratulations to me.

Q When you were Minister for Finance you were extraordinarily generous to the Arts and you introduced various imaginative schemes for the Arts. Could we expect your administration to go on in this field?

I regard a coherent well-planned cultural policy as an essential element in Ireland.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY ELEVEN/...

- Q Your selection as Taoiseach designate has already been interpreted in sections of the British media as a triumph for a republican tendency within Fianna Fail. In general terms, is that an impression that you would be at pains to remove?

I would discount it completely. We in Fianna Fail went through a perfectly democratic process this morning electing a leader of our party, nothing more or less than that.

- Q You think that sections of the British media may have seen a significance in your selection?

Well, I am afraid that, as George Colley pointed out recently, some elements of the British media have a number of false impressions about this country generally and in so far as we can do so, we will make every effort to counteract those false impressions to give the right image of Ireland to everybody in Britain including the media.

- Q How did you spend your time in the political wilderness following your dismissal?

I don't ever recollect being in the wilderness.

- Q Your dismissal from the Taoiseach's cabinet in 1970 and your appearance in Court - do you regard that now as - if I can mix the metaphors Sir - water under the bridge or a skeleton on your cupboard?

They are very much now a matter for history. I am leaving it to the historians.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY TWELVE/...

Q Will you help the historians?

I'll write my own.

Q Can we take it then that you are not going to pursue a radically different line from that pursued by the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch, as distinct from the line pursued by Fianna Fail?

There is only one sensible line to pursue.....
and that is to use every means at our disposal...
to concentrate on bringing the people of this
island together in harmony and in co-operation
..... and the way that can be achieved is for
policy... spelled out by the Party from day to day.

Q Do you think that the events of ten years ago are a liability to you personally in an attempting to lead the party in that direction ... and the antipathy of you by Unionist politicians?

I am of Northern extraction. I have enormous contacts all over Northern Ireland on every side of the fence. I will maintain these contacts . I propose to ensure that every personal effort on my behalf is utilised to bring about state of affairs.

Further questions in Irish

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY THIRTEEN/...

- Q You have been asked if you will talk to the SDLP. Will you try to contact the Unionists and members of the DUP perhaps in order to achieve this peaceful united Ireland you speak of?

I think Jim Callaghan once used the phrase - in a different practical context but it's not a bad one - my door will certainly be open to anybody.

- Q Do you think with your background, Sir, that you can have any meaningful dialogue with Unionists?

What background are you talking about?

- Q We refer to 1970. Certainly whatever happened in those years, a reputation attached itself to you.

I have a list of personal relationships with a large number of Unionists right across the spectrum of Northern Ireland.

- Q You would talk to Rev. Ian Paisley?

I certainly would, of course.

- Q You think you would have anything to say?

I think we would have a lot to say to each other, but whether we'd listen to each other or not...

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Sírbhisi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY FOURTEEN/...

Q Are you concerned with the fact that the sources of your obvious wealth have never been disclosed. Would you consider disclosing your business connections?

I think you are under a simple false assumption in saying that I am a wealthy man. I wouldn't necessarily assume that if I were you. Ask my bank manager!

Irish question on Udaras na Gaeilge.

Q Did you know going into the meeting this morning that you were going to win it?

My colleagues say I was.

Q Did you talk to Michael O'Kennedy yesterday?

Certainly. I talk to Michael O'Kennedy every day of the week .. and George Colley and Gene Fitzgerald and anyone else.

Q To your best knowledge, did you get the support of any other member of the Cabinet besides yourself?

The voting papers were burned unfortunately.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY FIFTEEN/...

Q You spoke sometime ago about legislative changes in the industrial relations field. Are you proposing to introduce any restrictions on the rights of the ICTU? (trade unions)

We have proposed legislative changes in mind for some time. Perhaps we might pursue those more urgently.

Q How do you think your relationship is with the trade unions?

..... perhaps I know the Transport Union better because it just so happens that it has close connections with my part of the city but I have the best of relationship with the unions.

Q How do you respond to criticisms of the 1977 election manifesto - the strategy set up in that manifesto for the economy? Will you review that strategy in mid-term?

It's already under review. The fundamental changes taking place on the world scene particularly necessitate reviews of economic strategy.

Q Can you be more specific on that?

Not at this stage.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY SIXTEEN/...

Q Have you an open mind about the next election -
the timing of the next election?

It won't be before Christmas.

Q Will your Government go ahead and publish the
White Paper that's due out this week or next.

Yes.

Q It has been said that over the past two and a half
years, you were never really happy with the direction
of Government economic policies. What sort of
changes are you likely to make?

Q Again, it would be premature of me to talk about
policy at this stage. I should point out that the
policies pursued so far were collective economic
policies. I, as any other Minister, made my
contribution to the Cabinet table on the formulation
of those policies. But, once they are published,
they are collective Government policies.

... some of them haven't succeeded, we all recognise
that ... changing circumstances, external factors and
targets have not been reached.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísí Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY SEVENTEEN/...

Q During the tension of the past few days, were you tempted to have a cigarette?

Never again. I am fifteen years off cigarettes and I would never consider smoking again.
... the Health Education Bureau will very shortly now be starting a campaign which will be specifically directed to you unfortunate lot who are still smoking designed to help you stop smoking. Watch out for the HEB latest announcement.

Q As party leader, do you see yourself imposing stiffer party discipline on Dail members?

Not particularly.

Q Do you see yourself allowing the mechanism which was designed for Mr. Gibbons during the Family Planning Bill affair to continue?

That mechanism hasn't yet been brought forward.

Q Therefore it doesn't exist in your view?

We haven't brought it forward.

Q Do you see yourself having many problems managing an 82 member Dail party?

82 problems approximately - no 81!

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY EIGHTEEN/...

- Q I know you can't comment on the shape of your Cabinet - but in terms of the Constitution, you are limited to 15 - will you give some consideration to changing the roles and reshaping some of the Departments - and amalgamating some - creating new Departments?

That will be a matter in time, not immediately. I don't think we have much time at the moment. We have a lot of very very urgent things to do, financial business and other urgent matters.

- Q Will you take over the broad direction of the economy yourself?

No. The Taoiseach has enough to do with the overall management without taking over any particular sector and making it his own private concern.

- Q Do you intend to keep Northern Ireland as part of your own area of responsibility?

The tradition in the Party is that the North of Ireland policy is restricted, in major announcements on North of Ireland matters, to the Foreign Minister and the Taoiseach. We will probably continue that.

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY NINETEEN/...

Q If you are not going to amalgamate any Departments, might you abolish one?

In time perhaps. I just want to say there that the problems and the urgencies and the priorities of the situation are constantly changing, and there are two cases in point. Everybody now realises that energy and industrial relations now assume a role in our affairs that they didn't five years ago. So I think in these circumstances it is only logical that the structure of Government for dealing with particular aspects of the life of the nation would be changed from time to time. And that would involve perhaps amalgamating or changing or starting new Departments.

Q Since your return to the Front Bench, have you been to Northern Ireland many times?

Several. My granny lives in Northern Ireland. I have 52 first cousins living in Northern Ireland. Some time ago one of the most tragic things I did was that I walked the streets of Derry with John Hume and looked at the terrible destruction of what was once a very beautiful city which I knew when I was young, when I was a child.

Q Do you expect to be going there several times in the near future?

As often as necessary, yes.

Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571

Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800

HAUGHEY TWENTY/...

Q In respect of the growing unrest of the PAYE sector, what priority will you give to it?

Not prepared to discuss it now.

Q You seem at times to almost glory in the very crude picture of you as depicted in the British press on the very understandable analysis that being attacked by the British press never did an Irish politician any harm. When you talk about correcting misunderstandings about the right image of Ireland, what do you consider that right image which you would want?

That we are a modern, vibrant nation with a basically very sound economy - with a well educated young population. I think we have a great place in Europe and the world.

Q Those, as you know, are not the grounds on which the British press usually attacks you or indeed Ireland. How will you correct that? To project image?

I am not sure of the thrust of the question. It is the function of any nation to endeavour to portray itself in the best possible light on the world scene. I think it (British press) has several misguided preconceptions of us.

Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571

Seirbhís Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800

HAUGHEY TWENTY ONE/...

Q How worried are you about this?

In so far as they inhibit our relationships -
fruitful, co-operative harmonious relationships -
I deplore them.

Q Earlier you condemned the Provisional IRA. What
is your attitude to demands for an amnesty for
prisoners who claim political status?

.....matter of policy

Q An open mind on the question?

No.

Thank you very much for your attendance. No doubt we will
be meeting again. You will understand that my position
this evening is restricted and I apologise for that.
I am still Minister for Health and Social Welfare and
different members of the Cabinet occupy their own
responsibilities. Jack Lynch is still our Taoiseach.
And I do not think we should denigrate him by the
pre-emptory assuming of his powers or position. So
that, to that extent, I'll have to restrict my answers
to a number of questions, but I'll always be glad to come
back to these issues from time to time as it appears to
you and to me to be necessary. May I say in conclusion,
that today is a day of very mixed feelings for me. It
is a day of enormous feeling of responsibility. I think
it is only slowly beginning to permeate through to me
what an enormous and difficult task I am undertaking.
But as I have said, "I am greatly encouraged by a number
of factors

*Government Information Services
Dublin 2, Ireland
Telephone 767571*

*Seirbhísi Eolais an Rialtais,
Baile Átha Cliath 2
Telex 5800*

HAUGHEY TWENTY TWO/...

I am greatly encouraged by the fact that we have a great country - great little country as England and the Americans call it; that we have a basically sound economy; we have a young population, bright well educated young people. I think with leadership and vision we can achieve great things. I am particularly reinforced by the loyalty and support which I am getting, first of all, from Jack Lynch who is handing over to me, and George Colley and all my other colleagues and my parliamentary party.