

CONFIDENTIAL

ANGLO-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL CONFERENCE
JOINT RECORD OF MEETING HELD ON 4 MAY 1988 IN
IVEAGH HOUSE, DUBLIN

Present

Irish Side

Mr. Collins
Mr. Burke
Mr. Dorr
Mr. Mathews
Mr. Gallagher
Mr. Brosnan
Mr. Corcoran
Ms. Anderson

British Side

Mr. King
Mr. Stanley
Sir John Blelloch
Sir Kenneth Bloomfield
Mr. Burns
Mr. Fell
Mr. Stephens
Ambassador Fenn

Secretariat

Mr. O hUiginn
Mr. Ryan
Mr. Collins

Mr. Miles
Mr. Masefield
Ms. Steele

1. The Secretary of State had a private meeting with the Taoiseach before the Conference meeting. Ministers then had private discussions for an hour. Following this, there was a restricted meeting for which Ministers were joined by the Commissioner of the Garda Síochána, the Chief Constable of the RUC and a number of officials. This latter meeting is recorded separately. The Conference then met in full session, the Commissioner and the Chief Constable having withdrawn at the end of the restricted session.

2. The Irish side raised a number of points which they considered important in the context of ensuring that proposed legislation on Fair Employment is effective in eliminating discrimination and establishing fair patterns of employment in Northern Ireland. In particular, they stressed their concern

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

that the new legislation should result in a concrete and measurable change in the employment patterns of the two communities in Northern Ireland. The Irish side's concern on specific points included the following:

- the new Fair Employment Commission should have the power to require firms to meet certain quantified goals within a specific time frame;
- the need to ensure that the merit principle is defined and applied in such a way as not to act as an obstacle to affirmative action;
- the importance of choosing an experienced and suitably qualified President for the proposed Fair Employment Tribunal within the existing system of industrial Tribunals. It was equally important to have a specialised panel of lay assessors drawn from a catchment other than the panel representative of both sides of industry which applies at present in the Industrial Tribunals system.

3. The British side reaffirmed their commitment to introducing Fair Employment legislation as soon as possible and confirmed that a White Paper would be published shortly. They pointed out that as a Command Paper, this document could not be released until after it had been laid before Parliament. Subject to this, the British side would aim to meet the Irish side's request for full information in time to enable them to comment on the White Paper as positively as possible. They attached great importance to having the support of the Irish side for their proposals on Fair Employment. On the issues raised by the Irish side the British side responded that:

- it was their intention that directions from the new Fair Employment Commission would be legally enforceable and could include goals and timetables, but the distinction between goals and quotas needed to be kept in mind;
- appointment solely on merit was a basic principle in the proposals but the British side accepted that it was also important that this should not be used as an excuse to resist necessary change;
- on institutional issues, they accepted the importance of the composition of the Tribunal, and of the need for experienced people who could

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 3 -

develop a consistent body of law in this area. They felt that the system of lay assessors in the Industrial Tribunal system had worked well and had gained a high level of acceptance.

4. There was a discussion on the economic and social problems of West Belfast and other disadvantaged areas. The Irish side reiterated their view that, in the light of the particular economic and social problems in West Belfast and, given the expectations which existed as a result of discussion at the previous Conference meeting, a series of proposals to tackle the problems of West Belfast needed to be brought forward at an early date. The British side confirmed that proposals on this subject were being considered. They stated that the economic and social problems in West Belfast had to be seen generally in an inner-city context with the additional factor of violence and intimidation to which businesses in that area were subject. The Irish side was invited to submit any suggestions before final decisions were taken. It was agreed that the issue would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Conference.

5. Both sides agreed that there would be a discussion on the operation of the International Fund for Ireland at the next meeting of the Conference. The Irish side stressed the urgency and the importance of making a joint approach to the European Community for further resources for the Fund in the light of concern in the United States that the donor base should be broadened. The British side confirmed that the matter was being discussed with a view to an early decision.

6. The work being undertaken by officials on ways of improving relations between the security forces and the community and generally of enhancing confidence in the administration of justice, was welcomed by both sides. In this context, the Irish side said there was a particular need to address the problem of harassment. The British side stated that it was important to study and identify the issues which bore directly on the confidence of the minority in the administration of justice.

7. In the course of an exchange of views on the progress of the disciplinary investigations being carried out by Mr. Kelly which arose from the Stalker/Sampson report, the British side reaffirmed their determination to have the matter resolved as quickly as possible.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

8. There was a discussion on the Irish request for a more liberal release policy for young offenders sentenced to life sentences for serious crimes. The Irish side reiterated their view that the system of release of young offenders had been successful. None of those so far released had been convicted of reinvolvement in terrorism and there was, in their view, a strong case for adopting a more liberal policy in this area. The British side provided statistical information on prisoners in Northern Ireland which demonstrated that since 1985 nearly half the young offenders serving "life" sentences had been released. The question of relaxing the criteria for release was a sensitive issue, but they were examining it, taking account of the views put forward by the Irish side.

9. It was agreed that the Conference would meet again soon.

10. A brief joint statement (copy attached) was issued following the meeting.

CONFIDENTIAL

Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Conference

Joint Statement

A meeting of the Anglo Irish Intergovernmental Conference took place in Dublin on 4 May, 1988. The British Government was represented by the Joint Chairman, Mr. Tom King M.P. (Secretary of State for Northern Ireland) accompanied by Mr. John Stanley M.P. (Minister for State for Northern Ireland). The Irish Government was represented by Mr. Gerard Collins T.D. Minister for Justice (Acting Joint Chairman) and by Mr. Ray Burke T.D. Minister for Energy and Communications. The Commissioner of the Garda Síochána and the Chief Constable of the RUC were present for that part of the Conference which dealt with security cooperation.

The Conference condemned the continuing acts of terrorism, both inside Northern Ireland and elsewhere; and reaffirmed the determination of both Governments to use all possible steps to combat terrorism. They discussed further steps to carry forward cross-border co-operation, including action against racketeering and smuggling as well as terrorism.

The Conference reviewed work and issues bearing on ways of improving relations between the security forces and the community and of enhancing confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland.

The Conference had an extensive discussion on social and economic issues in Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State confirmed that a White Paper was due to be published shortly, setting out proposals for new legislation on Fair Employment. The Irish Ministers welcomed the intention to publish the White Paper. They emphasised the points they considered of particular importance to ensure the effectiveness of the proposed new

legislation in the light of the commitment to eliminate discrimination and establish fair patterns of employment in Northern Ireland.

In the course of the Conference discussions on the economic situation in Northern Ireland the Secretary of State confirmed that work is well advanced on ways to address the serious economic and social problems of West Belfast and other disadvantaged areas. Irish Ministers reiterated their close interest in and concern about these issues. It was agreed that the position would be reviewed at the next Conference.

The two sides also had an exchange of views on the operation of the International Fund and the prospects of obtaining further resources for it.

The Conference agreed to meet again shortly.