

UNCLASSIFIED
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INFO IMMEDIATE WASHINGTON BIS NEW YORK NIO BELFAST

ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT: DAIL DEBATE

SUMMARY

1. AT THE END OF THE LOW KEY DAIL DEBATE LAST NIGHT THE GOVERNMENT MOTION ENDORSING THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT WAS APPROVED BY 88 VOTES TO 75. FIANNA FAIL SPEECHES ON THE LAST DAY WERE MORE CONCILATORY THAN HITHERTO.

DETAIL

2. THE LAST DAY OF THE DAIL DEBATE ON THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT SAW A MORE CONCILATORY MOOD AMONG FIANNA FAIL TDS. MARY O'ROURKE (FIANNA FAIL FRONT BENCH SPOKESMAN ON EDUCATION) SPOKE SORROWFULLY OF DIFFERENCES WITH THE SDLP AS 'JUST A FALLING OUT BETWEEN FRIENDS'. SHE WAS CONCERNED THAT THERE WAS A DANGER THAT THE BRITISH WOULD NOW FEEL 'THAT IS THE END OF THE IRISH PROBLEM'. SEAMUS BRENNAN (FIANNA FAIL DISSIDENT WING) WENT SO FAR AS TO SAY THAT THERE WERE 'POSITIVE DETAILED ASPECTS' IN THE AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD HELP TO CALM FEARS WITHIN THE MINORITY IN THE NORTH, BUT THE DOCUMENT COULD NOT BE SAID TO BE THE FINAL WORD AND THERE WAS LEGITIMATE SCOPE FOR GENUINE RESERVATIONS WHICH SHOULD BE STATED IN THE DAIL. HE 'DID NOT THINK THERE WAS ANYBODY WHO WOULD WANT TO OBSTRUCT WHAT WAS AN EXPERIMENT'. HE CALLED FOR AN END TO DIVISIONS AMONGST NATIONALISTS. BOBBY MOLLOY (FIANNA FAIL) SAID THAT WHILST THERE WERE PARTS OF THE AGREEMENT THAT COULD IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY, TO WHICH HE WOULD GIVE 'QUALIFIED SUPPORT', THE GOVERNMENT WAS SEEKING SUPPORT FOR THE AGREEMENT AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING ARTICLE 1 WHICH GAVE A VETO TO UNIONISTS. HE COULD NOT ACCEPT THAT, BUT WISHED MR BARRY WELL IN HIS WORK IN THE NEW CONFERENCE.

3. WINDING UP FOR FIANNA FAIL, BRIAN LENIHAN SAID THAT IT WAS IMPORTANT TO REMEMBER THAT THE AGREEMENT WAS A SIGNED TREATY AND NOT JUST A STATEMENT OF INTENT OR A COMMUNIQUE. UNLESS ARTICLE 1. WAS RENEGOTIATED THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WOULD BE PRECLUDED FROM RAISING THE ISSUE OF IRISH UNITY AT ANY INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE OR JUDICIAL TRIBUNAL. BY VOTING AGAINST THE GOVERNMENT MOTION FIANNA FAIL WISHED TO OPPOSE THE FUNDAMENTAL CHANGE THAT IT HAD BROUGHT TO THE CONSTITUTIONAL POSITION BUT 'WE ARE NOT REJECTING ANY MEASURES OR ATTEMPTS UNDERTAKEN UNDER THE AGREEMENT TO IMPROVE THE SITUATION OF THOSE WHO LIVE IN THE TORTURED NORTH OF IRELAND'. FIANNA FAIL COULD NOT ACCEPT THE LEGITIMISATION OF PARTITION, OF BRITISH SOVEREIGNTY OR OF THE BRITISH PRESENCE IN IRELAND: 'OUR WHOLE PURPOSE OF A POLITICAL MOVEMENT IS THE PURSUIT OF A UNITED IRELAND BY POLITICAL MEANS' THE PROPOSED CONFERENCE WAS NEITHER EXECUTIVE NOR CONSULTATIVE, BUT SOMETHING LESS. HE CALLED FOR A CONSTITUTIONAL CONFERENCE.

4. IN HIS CONTRIBUTION, DES O'MALLEY, INDEPENDENT (EX-FF) SAID THAT THE HILLSBOROUGH AGREEMENT WAS NO LESS IMPORTANT THAN SUNNINGDALE AND HE HOPED IT WOULD BE SUCCESSFUL. HE UNDERSTOOD WHY UNIONISTS FELT BETRAYED, BUT IT SHOULD BE MADE CLEAR TO THEM THAT THE LACK OF CONSULTATION WAS NO-ONE'S FAULT BUT THEIR OWN. AT THE HEART OF THE UNIONIST FEARS WAS THE ANXIETY THAT OTHERS MIGHT ACT TOWARDS THEM AS THEY HAD ACTED IN THE LAST 50 YEARS. THE DAIL SHOULD REASSURE THEM THAT THIS WAS NOT SO. LIKE MANY OTHER SPEAKERS O'MALLEY CALLED UP THE SPIRIT OF DE VALERA, SAYING THAT IF HE AND OTHER FOUNDER MEMBERS OF FIANNA FAIL HAD BEEN ASKED TO VOTE FOR THE AGREEMENT 'DOES ANYBODY THINK THAT THEY WOULD NOT SUPPORT IT?'. THE AGREEMENT WAS, O'MALLEY SAID, CONSISTENT WITH THE FORUM REPORT AND HE WOULD SUPPORT IT 'BECAUSE IT IS RIGHT ... BECAUSE FOR THIS HOUSE TO REJECT IT WOULD BE UNTHINKABLE'. THE AGREEMENT REPRESENTED A WHOLE NEW CONCEPT IN ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS.

5. COALITION DEPUTIES MAINTAINED THEIR POSITION OF CAUTIOUS SUPPORT FOR THE AGREEMENT. MERVYN TAYLOR, THE LABOUR CHIEF WHIP, SAID THAT HE HAD FEARS ABOUT IT, BUT THESE WOULD HAVE BEEN MORE SERIOUS IF THE SDLP'S POSITION HAD BEEN DIFFERENT. THE FACT THAT THEY FOUND THERE WAS HOPE AND PROMISE IN THE AGREEMENT WAS THE MAJOR FACTOR IN GOING ALONG WITH IT, WITHOUT DEROGATION FROM THE ASPIRATION TO NATIONAL UNITY. MINISTER FOR LABOUR RUAIRH QUINN (LAB) SAID THAT THE AGREEMENT REPRESENTED A POSITIVE BASIS FOR FRUITFUL DIALOGUE AND ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO TRADITIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND. IN ESTABLISHING THE REPUBLIC'S RIGHT TO REGULAR FORMAL PARTICIPATION IN THE AFFAIRS OF NORTHERN IRELAND IT CONSTITUTED AN IMPORTANT STEP TOWARDS BREAKING THE POLITICAL DEADLOCK WHICH HAD CHARACTERISED NORTHERN POLITICS SINCE 1920. MR BARRY'S SPEECH, WINDING UP FOR THE GOVERNMENT, (MY TELNO 808) FOCUSSED ON POINTS RAISED BY DEPUTIES DURING THE DEBATE.

6. THE DAIL DIVIDED ON THE FIANNA FAIL AMENDMENT TO THE MOTION (PARA 2 OF MY TELNO 797). THIS WAS DEFEATED BY 88 VOTES TO 75. THE GOVERNMENT MOTION WAS THEN APPROVED BY THE SAME MARGIN. MARY HARNEY TD (FF) WAS THE ONLY DEPUTY TO BREAK PARTY RANKS. FINE GAEL AND LABOUR TD'S WERE ALSO JOINED BY DES O'MALLEY (INDEPENDENT) AND THE 2 WORKERS PARTY DEPUTIES. FIANNA FAIL RECEIVED THE VOTES OF NEIL BLANEY (IND FF) AND TONY GREGORY (IND). EDDIE COLLINS (FF) WAS ABSENT ON A VISIT OVERSEAS AND WAS PAIRED.

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