



King Norton ②
CDD

Ref. A085/3022

MR POWELL

ms

Mr Edward Heath's Private Secretary rang me to give me over the telephone the advance text of a statement which Mr Heath has issued today, embargued for 6.00 pm on 23 November.

2. The statement is generally supportive of the Hillsborough Agreement, but says that it is not a historic novelty, since the Sunningdale Agreement too contained specific acknowledgments, in an international agreement, of the status of Northern Ireland by the Republic of Ireland.

3. Mr Heath's statement concludes that recognition of this fact should strengthen rather than weaken the Hillsborough Agreement.

4. The full text will be available from this office from 25 November and I will be happy to supply copies as necessary.

5. I am copying this minute to the Private Secretaries to the Lord President, the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Chief Whip.

MS

M C STARK

25 November 1985



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COMPTROLLER

STATEMENT BY THE RT. HON. EDWARD HEATH MBE MP

RELEASE TIME: NOT FOR PUBLICATION OR BROADCAST BEFORE
1800 SATURDAY 23 NOVEMBER 1985

As I have stated publicly in the Country during the past week I welcome the Anglo-Irish Agreement concluded at Hillsborough. I hope to be able to elaborate on this if I catch the Speaker's eye during the debate on the Agreement next week.

In fairness however to the members of the then government of the Republic of Ireland, the political parties who formed the Power Sharing Executive in Northern Ireland, to the members of the then British Government and to their officials and advisors who worked tirelessly to bring about the Sunningdale Agreement in December 1973 between London, Belfast and Dublin I must now make the following points.

The Hillsborough Agreement is not an historic agreement between the two countries. It is not "the most formal commitment to the principle of consent made by any Irish Government". Nor is it "the first time we have had a recognition of that in writing from the Republic of Ireland". Nor is it "the first time in a formal international agreement that the Republic has recognised this position in Northern Ireland and has recognised that it cannot be changed except with the consent of the majority". All of these claims were made by the Prime Minister in her statement and in answers to questions in the House of Commons last Monday.

I must point out that in the Sunningdale Agreement of 9 December 1983 the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland stated at the end of paragraph 3 "the only unity they wanted to see was a unity established by consent".

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Paragraph 5 reads "the Irish Government fully accepted and solemnly declared that there could be no change in the status of Northern Ireland until a majority of the people of Northern Ireland desired a change in that status".

Paragraph 5 continues "the British Government solemnly declared that it was, and would remain, their policy to support the wishes of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland. The present status of Northern Ireland is that it is part of the United Kingdom. If in the future the majority of the people of Northern Ireland should indicate a wish to become part of a united Ireland, the British Government would support that wish."

Paragraph 6 runs "the conference agreed that a formal agreement incorporating the decisions of the British and Irish Governments would be signed at the formal stage of the conference and registered at the United Nations."

The Sunningdale Agreement would therefore become a fully international agreement setting out the present status of Northern Ireland and containing recognition by the governments of both the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland that it could only ever be changed by consent.

The fact that this situation has been fully accepted in both London and Dublin for the past twelve years should help to strengthen the Hillsborough Agreement, not weaken it.