



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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**Transcript of the Taoiseach and David Trimble  
on the steps of Government Buildings  
on Monday 2nd October 1995.**

**Taoiseach:**

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen. It was a great pleasure for me to welcome Mr. David Trimble and Ulster Unionist Party to have a meeting with me, here today. It's the first formal meeting for quite sometime between the Unionist Party and ourselves. It was a very constructive meeting. The Unionist representatives expressed their views very clearly. It was very important for us to understand those views. Obviously there were areas where we agreed, and there were also area where there was less than complete agreement and that is entirely to be expected. But what is important in my view, and I think, the view of the Unionist Party as well, is the fact that we are engaged now in a process of discussion. We have opened lines of communication between us, and we believe that those will bear fruit in the fullest of time. Thank you.

**Mr. David Trimble:**

This is the first time I have had the opportunity to come here, since the talks in 1992. I am happy to say that the discussions today have been much more positive and constructive than a lot of the discussions we had in 1992. I think that is very useful. The object of the exercise primarily this morning is to make sure that we understand each other better. We want to ensure that there is no opportunity for misunderstanding with regard to our respective positions and with regard to what we see as possible. Particularly from our point of view as to the things which we consider need to be done before there can be movement towards all-party talks. We have gone over the ground on that. Obviously as the Taoiseach said we are not on agreement on all matters relating to that, but we have gone over that ground and I think we do understand each others position more clearly as a result.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble could I ask you this morning in Belfast you said that, you do not see that the Dublin Government is continuing to not only try the ... thoroughly for Sinn Fein, IRA

**Mr. Trimble:**

I would rather not comment on what other people have said, we have been dealing with what we have said ourselves here today and I don't think it's helpful to go into comment on what third parties have said.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble what is behind those meetings with the ....

**Mr. Trimble:**

We had a good discussion where we explored those ideas where we agreed and we also felt open with areas that we disagreed.

**Journalist:**

Taoiseach, you said all-party talks were a bit slow, are we closer today than we were last week to all-party talks?

**Taoiseach:**

I think the fact that more people are talking to other people than was the case a few months ago means that inevitably we are moving towards an all inclusive dialogue and I think this meeting today was part of that. I am not however one who believes that there is a great deal of value in setting particular dates for particular events. Because I believe that those dates can become an inhibition as much as anything else in the course of constructive dialogue. What happened here today was that we opened up a number of topics. There were a number of topics where certainly I hadn't had the opportunity of discussing them with David Trimble since he became leader of the party and we have opened up the ground today. There is a lot more work to be done not just in discussions obviously between the unionist party and the Irish Government but between the governments, between the unionist party and other parties and so forth.

**Journalist:**

Question

**David Trimble:**

We had a discussion on that issue and I think its very important that we find ways in which we can build confidence and to deal with the issues that are necessary before there can be any what's called all inclusive talks process. I don't think its helpful to go over the detail of that our positions are I think well known.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble before you stay successful of your suggestions regarding .... in Northern Ireland ...

**Taoiseach:**

This is a proposal that has been put forward by the Unionist Party for discussion in Northern Ireland. We didn't discuss it in great detail today at all.

**David Trimble:**

The discussions today concentrated on the peace process and how that is developing particularly with regard to some of the issues just mentioned and we did not in the course of debate in this discussion explore matters that related to internal affairs of Northern Ireland.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble are you still insisting ....

**Mr. Trimble:**

We did have a discussion on that issue and I think we have now got a more detailed understanding of what happened.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble are you still insisting on the decommissioning of weapons before all parties are wrapped in?

**Mr. Trimble:**

I think it will absolutely have to be done, but what is inescapable is in the terms of paragraph ten of the Downing Street Declaration that people establish their commitment to exclusively peaceful methods and they have got to establish a commitment they have got to prove that they are committed and it is very difficult to see how that can be done without satisfactorily resolving the weapons issue.

**Journalist:**

Question

**Mr. Trimble:**

Its difficult to know just what the time table is, we have established a channel of communication and it will be used at whatever upgrade.

**Journalist:**

● Question

**Mr. Trimble:**

Well I am not going to go back over the ground that we discussed at the meeting, or at least not what we discussed at the meeting but which I set out in a speech in Belfast a week ago or so. Ken.

**Journalist:**

Question.

**Taoiseach:**

I don't think we should become involved in setting particular dead lines for any particular event because that tends to cause difficulty for all the participants. Frequently the difficulties can be ones that one does not foresee in advance of the time one is setting the deadline. But what I think we are seeing and have seen in recent weeks is steady progression in the scale of dialogue that is taking place. There is a calmer atmosphere now in regard to discussions than there was for example six weeks ago, where the much more constructive approach being taken by everybody was the willingness to listen, which I think is very, very important and I want to say that I value the opportunity, not so much although I did do so, of stating the Irish Government's position on a range of issues, to the Unionist Party, but I particularly valued the opportunity of hearing the unionist point of view, face to face rather than over the air waves.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble would you be coming back to Dublin to continue these discussions?

**Mr. Trimble:**

I will shortly be completing the round of discussions that I started after becoming leader. There are people that I won't be able to meet today. At some point in the future I hope to meet Mr. Spring and I have also to meet Paddy Ashdown. Then when I have done that I will have done what I had set out to do and of course I've been to Washington as well. I have achieved my initial goal of going around all the interested parties. Now just how we proceed after that we will see. But what has happened on this is the channels of communication have been established and we have demonstrated quite clearly that we are prepared to take the unionist case to wherever it matters, to explain

our position clearly so that people know exactly what we think is possible and what we think is not possible.

**Donal Kelly:**

Mr. Trimble we know that ... said last Friday that all-party talks were tantalising, .....?

**Mr. Trimble:**

It's difficult to assess because we are seeing a very negative attitude from some other parties, which we think have to make significant progress before we can get to an all-parties talks process.

**Journalist:**

You say Sinn Fein can make a commitment, but you are lucky, we are short of a national and ....

**Mr. Trimble:**

I think this is an issue that Sinn Fein have to grasp, have to show the willingness to deal openly and clearly with this issue. It is a question simply of whether they are committed to exclusively peaceful methods and if they are so committed then it will be easy for them to produce the necessary evidence.

**Journalist:**

Question

**Mr. Trimble:**

Well this was a proposal we remember, that originally we contributed to in the paper produced by the Ulster Unionist Party quite some time ago. Ken as you know was involved with it. We put this forward believing that it would be a way in which the issue could be resolved. The opportunity is there for other people to use it constructively and I hope they will do so.

**Taoiseach:**

Could I just say, we will not be able to take any more questions. But I want to say that I regard this as a very important meeting and I want to express my thanks to all the members of the media who have waited here to interview us and to thank the unionist party for coming here.