

# **Dermot Nally Papers**

**UCDA P254/37**

SECRET

1. I had extensive discussions with John Hume on the evening of the 22nd September and, briefly on the morning of the 23rd September, about a proposal he had to issue a statement on the Hume-Adams talks. This would state they had made proposals to both Governments and were awaiting a response (see draft attached).
2. I reacted in the strongest possible terms against this proposal. I said that a statement that Hume and Adams had agreed proposals to the Governments would be the focus of intense media interest. There would be unbearable pressures both on Hume himself and on the Government to say what the proposals were and what the Governments' reaction to them would be.
3. I felt the reaction of the British Government in such circumstances would almost certainly be to repudiate any notion that they were considering a proposal from Adams while the campaign of violence was on-going. Moreover, as he himself knew from Mr. Major, the British were worried about meshing the declaration with the Talks process, if only for presentational purposes. It was totally unrealistic therefore to expect that they would choose, or even consider, a proposal from Adams in an abrupt reversal of all of their basic positions to date and do so, moreover, in the run-up to the Tory Conference.
4. I pointed to the danger that media pressures might well result in various drafts being leaked, and I reminded him that some parts of such texts were both messy and liable to be misunderstood by people who did not know the full background.
5. I asked him also to consider his own position. I told him very bluntly that what he had in mind would overstretch his

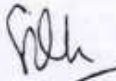


credit with the public in our jurisdiction. If they appeared to be faced with a choice of seeking progress as between constitutional parties or seeking to involve Sinn Fein at a time when IRA atrocities were on-going, there was no doubt in my mind as to which alternative they would insist the Irish Government should pursue. There were the gravest misgivings in many quarters about anything to do with Adams, and the Government could not ignore that. If a division appeared between him and the Irish Government, which was almost unavoidable if he pursued his proposal, it would be exploited by his enemies ruthlessly. I felt Hume could do enormous damage to his own prestige and, effectively, become a political hostage to Sinn Fein. I urged that no measure whatever should be taken except after the closest consultation with, and clearance by, the Taoiseach.

6. Hume seemed to take these arguments on board and in my hearing, rang his clerical contact and assured me that no action would be taken for a couple of weeks.
7. On my arrival back from Derry on 23rd I learned that Mr. Hume in fact had been in contact with the Taoiseach on that day. He seemed under the impression that he had got a green or "amber" light for proceeding. (He is well-known in his political life generally for hearing, in all good faith, only those things that he wants to hear from his contacts). I rang him again and reiterated many of the above points to him, making clear that I thought the course he proposed would be a monumental mistake both in terms of the project everybody wanted to succeed and in terms of his own standing and prestige.
8. He said that he was "very well aware of the risks" but that the pressures on him were enormous. He made clear that the initiative for such a statement had come from him. He said

that the Taoiseach had undertaken to come back to him after our contact with the British tomorrow to let him know the result. If the message was that the draft was being considered in a positive light, then he would hold off.

9. I made it clear that anything about the declaration would obviously have to be considered at the highest level on the British side and that there was no question of having any definite result from tomorrow's meeting.
10. I confirmed with him our understanding that he would do nothing about a statement until he had had a further discussion with the Taoiseach after Friday.



Sean O hUiginn  
24 September, 1993

SECRET

Text as read out by John Hume

Our discussions aimed at the creation of a peace process involving both Governments and all parties have made considerable progress. We have suspended our detailed discussions while we await the response of both Governments to the outline proposal we have put to them. We are concerned that if both Governments agree to the process that we have outlined, a process designed to lead to agreement among the divided people of this island, that it will provide a solid basis for lasting peace. It is also obviously designed to ensure that any new agreement that emerges from that process respects the diversity of our different traditions and earns their allegiance.