

23 JUN 1998

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FROM: SETH SPEIRS
 Talks Secretariat
 21 June 1996

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
 PS/Sir John Wheeler (L,B&DFP) - B
 PS/Michael Ancram (L,B&DENI) - B
 PS/Malcom Moss (L,DOE&DHSS) - B
 PS/Baroness Denton (L,DED&DANI) - B
 PS/PUS (L&B) - B
 PS/Sir David Fell - B
 Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
 Mr Bell - B
 Mr Legge - B
 Mr Leach (L&B) - B
 Mr Steele - B
 Mr Watkins - B
 Mr Wood (L&B) - B
 Mr Beeton - B
 Mr Currie - B
 Mr Hill (L&B) - B
 Mr Lavery - B
 Mr Maccabe - B
 Mr Perry - B
 Mr Stephens - B
 Ms Checksfield - B
 Miss Harrison (L&B) - B
 Ms Mapstone - B
 Mr Whysall (L&B) - B
 Ms Collins, Cab Office via IPL-B
 Mr O'Mahony, TAU - B
 Mr Lamont, RID - B
 HMA Dublin - B
 Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
 Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
 Mrs McNally (L&B) - B

FILE NOTE

MEETING BETWEEN MINISTER OF STATE AND THE UDP: 20 JUNE 1996

Those Present: Michael Ancram, Minister of State
 Gary McMichael, UDP
 Davy Adams, UDP
 John White, UDP

Summary

The UDP delegation were in a generally upbeat and co-operative mood. Their main concern was that a large amount of time was being spent on discussing the Ground Rules and Rules of Procedure, whilst the situation on the ground was extremely tense. Although they were not happy with all the elements of the Ground Rules and Procedures, they were clearly prepared to compromise, to ensure that progress was made, and that the talks moved on to more substantial issues.

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Points Raised During the Meeting

Gary McMichael noted the UDP's concern about the amount of time being spent on debating the Ground Rules and Procedures. Whilst they had problems with some parts of the Rules, they would prefer to compromise to ensure that progress was made.

The Minister sympathised with their position, but noted that the question of the Ground Rules and Rules of Procedure was extremely important. He outlined that the Ground Rules were an integral part of the process, because without the legal backing they provided, the talks process could not continue without the possibility of legal challenge.

The Minister also noted that the Rules of Procedure were more flexible and open to change by all parties involved in the talks process. The outcome of the process, would be a rule book for the various Chairman which would then govern the proceeding negotiations. This could only come about by agreement of all parties. The UDP delegation appeared to accept this.

Davy Adams noted that all parties had entered ^{the}to negotiations knowing the ground rules in advance. He indicated his awareness that both the UUP and SDLP had to come out of the negotiations on procedural matters with their credibility intact. His concern was that the smaller parties, and the UDP in particular, might lose out because of this. They, for example, had problems with references to decommissioning but were prepared to accept them to make progress. The Minister accepted this, but noted that such issues would inevitably turn up from time to time.

Gary McMichael and John White were concerned not to get bogged down in procedures at this critical stage of the peace process. They were doing their best to maintain faith in the peace process on the ground, but this may be lost if progress was not made.

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The Minister expressed his hope, that these problems would be sorted out in time for Senator Mitchell's return on Tuesday. He commented that he was well aware of the situation on the ground, and of the time constraints, but if parties started to leave because they were not happy with the Rules of Procedure, there would be ^{no} peace process at all.

John White then asked the Minister if he had any inkling of the IRA's future plans. The Minister assured him that there was no concrete information that violence was about to break out again in Northern Ireland. He hoped that the reaction from the Irish Government to the Manchester bombing would indicate to Sinn Fein that they had stretched their credibility to the limit.

The Minister then soothed the egos of the UDP delegation, by stressing their importance to the peace process. They were setting an example: the Loyalist ceasefires were holding and the UDP were fully included in the democratic process.

The meeting closed with the Minister thanking the UDP for their patience. He hoped, that as a new party to the talks process, all the waiting around was not proving too difficult for them. The UDP left in an upbeat mood.

(Signed by)

SETH SPEIRS

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