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FROM: WILLIAM STEVENSON
Talks Secretariat
20 June 1996

cc: 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

**MINISTER OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY:
20 JUNE 1996**

The meeting began at 12.55 pm and was attended by Mr Ervine and Mr Spence.

Mr Ervine said that the PUP considered the debate on the Ground Rules to be minor. The more important issue was the role of the Chairman. They wanted the powers of the Chairman to be maintained. Mr Ervine did not see a link between the powers of the Chairman and Northern Ireland's constitutional position.

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The Minister agreed, and said that we were in the "position taking stage". We needed a workable set of rules which allowed the Chairman to do his job.

Mr Ervine said that Mitchell as an independent Chairman is vital to the decommissioning problem and that the PUP would not wish to close the door on the IRA's participation - Sinn Fein cannot be excluded permanently.

The Minister confirmed that it was the two Governments' intention to implement Mitchell.

Mr Spence said that confidentiality between the PUP and HMG to date had been impeccable, and that the PUP could reveal more of their position if they knew the "end game".

The Minister said that the end game was to find a way to implement the Mitchell Report and ultimately to find an accommodation for all sections in Northern Ireland.

Mr Ervine said that the PUP had a volatile community and that they were fearful of the process collapsing. They were annoyed by the Chief Constable's comments today that another bomb could put the loyalists "over the edge". While PUP agreed that Trimble needs bolstered against the DUP/UKUP they would not wish the Ulster Unionists to have the luxury of excluding Sinn Fein indefinitely. Mitchell must have authority and the process without Sinn Fein is devalued.

The Minister said that the pendulum of accommodation will swing throughout the process.

Mr Ervine thought that the two Governments, SDLP and the Ulster Unionists should be able to accept a composite document on procedures.

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The Minister said that he hoped that work over the next few days would resolve the Ground Rules issue once and for all.

The meeting ended at 1.15 pm.

(Signed)

WILLIAM STEVENSON
Talks Secretariat