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82B 14 JUN 1996
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FROM: QUENTIN THOMAS
POLITICAL DIRECTOR (L)
14 June 1996
QT/MR/67680

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PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Leach (L&B)
Mr Bell
Mr Watkins
Mr DJR Hill
Mr Stephens
Mr Beeton
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Mr Wood (L&B)
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Ths McNally

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE DUP: 12 JUNE 1996: SWEETNESS
AND LIGHT MAKES A COME-BACK

I wonder if I could offer one or two comments, prompted by your note of the Secretary of State's most recent meeting with Dr Paisley and his colleagues.

2. First, in paragraph 6, you record the Secretary of State as pointing out that it was open to any party to put forward changes to the Rules of Procedure or even the Ground Rules. This must be right. The participants are masters of their own procedure. However I think it is worth emphasising that Ground Rules have a somewhat different status from the procedural guidelines. The procedural guidelines were simply concocted by the two Governments, and rather hastily at that. The Ground Rules represent a more considered judgement by the two Governments after a process of intensive proximity talks. They have been published as a Command Paper. Most importantly, they define the negotiations to which the

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participants had been elected, by virtue of Section 2(1) of the N.I. (Entry to Negotiations etc.) Act. Their legal status must accordingly be distinct from that of the procedural guidelines. Moreover, as a matter of political reality, while the Irish side have been persuaded to put the procedural guidelines in issue, they are likely, with SDLP encouragement, to regard the Ground Rules as much more sacred territory. Since, in practice, the SDLP and the Irish Government could block any change to them if they so chose I think we should be wary of encouraging other participants to regard them as being that easy to change. Of course if their persuasive powers bring this about...

6. I am not sure that in the 1991/92 Talks protection officers

3. Second, I note that in paragraph 10 there was a discussion of what is meant by "agreement" in the document of 13 June on which work is now proceeding. Again, it must be right that we pursue unanimity but I wonder if we could be held to that. If the process of "conferring" leads to deadlock then I suspect that, after an appropriate period we, and most immediately the Chairmen, to whom the initial decision would presumably fall, would seek to settle matters on the basis of sufficient consensus.

4. Third, I see that from paragraph 12(a) of your note there was some incident when Alex Attwood apparently tried to gain access to the Conference Room by the door immediately behind where Dr Paisley was speaking. I take it that Mr Attwood is a member of the SDLP's support team. The implication of Dr Paisley's account was that his protection officer had sought to prevent Mr Attwood gaining access to the Conference Room. I do not know whether we have had heard any more about this incident, for example from Mr Attwood. But if Dr Paisley's protection officer has really taken it upon himself to control entry to the Conference Room I think we should regard this as a serious excess of zeal necessitating some corrective briefing. Should, indeed, the protection officers be immediately outside the Conference Room in any case? I think I have noticed that the Secretary of State's congregate in the Lobby by the stairs. As far

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as I am concerned Mr Attwood, if he is a member of the SDLP support team, can walk into the Conference Room by any door whether Dr Paisley happens to be near it or not. And it is certainly not for protection officers to exercise control over this.

5. This may all be garbled and it may be helpful if Mr Maccabe could make discreet enquiries of the SDLP. Clearly the potential for somewhat ugly exchanges may increase if Sinn Fein ever join the proceedings. But the last thing we want is allegations that jackboots have interfered with a democratic process.

6. I am not sure that in the 1991/92 Talks protection officers - with the exception of those with Ministers - came beyond the Lobby of the building. That may be the right answer.

[SIGNED]

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