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From: PS/Secretary of State
13 June 1996

DESK IMMEDIATE!!

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
Mr Leach (L&B) - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Whysall - B
Miss Harrison - B
Mr Campbell Bannerman - B
Mr Cran - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
Mr Budd, Cabinet Office - T
Mr Holmes, No 10 - T
HMA Dublin - B

MR HILL - B

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

At Dr Paisley's request, he, together with Peter Robinson, William McCrea and Nigel Dodds, came to see the Secretary of State in Castle Buildings on 12 June.

2. Dr Paisley opened by saying that he remained extremely unhappy about how Mitchell had been imposed as Chairman of the Plenary Session of the Talks. Peter Robinson endorsed this and said that the party had been appallingly treated on the previous night. They had never received the document circulated at mid-night until they had actually been in a meeting with the Secretary of State and had accordingly had no chance to read it properly. The DUP were very angry that they had not been consulted in advance of the Government's imposition of Mitchell.

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3. The Secretary of State apologised for the fact that the document had not reached them until the last minute (though I am told that when it was delivered to the DUP offices, they were empty). He said that there had been a number of meetings with the DUP during which it had become clear that Mitchell was unacceptable to them. After those meetings, it emerged that a deal was being struck between the UUP and the Irish Government though we had not seen any paper until very late in the day. The results of the UUP/Irish discussions had been agreed with the Irish Government and the Chairman at around mid-night the previous day and the results had been circulated as a substitute for the paper tabled by the two Governments in the morning. It was not a lengthy paper and he had observed that when he came into the Chamber, the DUP delegation had not been reading it - instead Dr Paisley was on his feet making a speech.

4. The Secretary of State said that the two Governments had agreed that the paper circulated at mid-night would form the basis for further progress. It had been quite clear from the consultations that it was not possible to secure any greater convergence and that therefore there was no option other than to implement the invitations to George Mitchell and the other Chairmen on the basis of these proposals and consequently for Mitchell to be installed as Chairman of the Plenary. He had not said and did not say now that this had been agreed with all the parties.

5. Robinson said the Government were not complying with their own rules which required consensus. That had evidently not been available then. How often was this imposition going to take place? The Secretary of State said that the two Governments did not require agreement to appoint a Chairman. They had convened the Talks and on that basis were entitled to chair them jointly. They were also entitled to delegate the Chairmanship. However, the Chairman's ability to operate effectively did depend on consensus among delegates. There was then a brief but confusing exchange with

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William McCrea about a couple of press statements which had implied that there had been agreement on how Mitchell was appointed, when that was not in fact the case.

6. The Secretary of State then moved on to the work being carried out on procedures and said that at the moment there were no rules of procedure. The British Government was a participant like anyone else. He was glad that the DUP had handled themselves so well in declaring their commitment to the six Mitchell principles. He confirmed that in the circumstances the Government would not be in the position of imposing anything on anyone. He repeated that the participants in negotiations were in a position to secure whether the Chairman could or could not do his job or theoretically change him. It was open to any party to put forward proposals for changing the rules of procedure or even the ground rules - or put forward proposals of their own. However, changes to the rules of procedure put forward on 6 June would require agreement.

7. The DUP representatives seemed to take some encouragement from this. Peter Robinson said that if he was going to serve on the Committee dealing with procedural rules he needed this to be clear. (Comment: This implies that he is at least considering being part of the Committee dealing with procedures which will be starting work on Monday under Mitchell's Chairmanship.) Robinson went on to say that the DUP did not want to frustrate this process. They wanted to make it work but they were not prepared to be ignored or insulted any more.

8. The Secretary of State said that he recognised the DUP's soreness in this matter. Dodds said that the Secretary of State should have been prepared to take the points of order before he had appointed Mitchell. The Secretary of State disputed this by saying it would have been only appropriate to take points of order if prior agreement had been required for the appointment of Mitchell. As he had already explained, this was not the case. In practice the Governments had to appoint Mitchell and the other Chairman. There

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were no others available. Robinson expressed disbelief saying that surely out of 5½ billion people in the world someone else might have done. The Secretary of State declined to get into this argument.

9. William McCrea then returned to the iniquity of not having had time to read the document before it was imposed by the two Governments. He said that the DUP read every section of such documents in order to decipher them properly. The Secretary of State declined to get into this argument again but, in response to a question from Robinson, confirmed that the Chairman had asked for ideas from delegates which would be drawn together over the weekend for discussion on Monday. The Chairman relied on the support of the delegates and he had made it clear that he was prepared to accept new ideas. He confirmed in answer to a question from Nigel Dodds that like the Irish Government, the British Government would be pressing for adoption of the rules circulated on 6 June.

10. There was then a brief discussion about what was meant by "agreement" in the document circulated the previous mid-night. The Secretary of State said that in effect this meant unanimity in the debate about procedures.

11. Dodds then reported a DUP concern about the small parties, notably the loyalists, seeking to nominate non-elected individuals as representatives with full powers. The Secretary of State noted this and said that this was of course now a matter for the Chairman.

12. The meeting by this time was very relaxed and good humoured and Paisley and his colleagues finished by raising a number of other issues, including:

a. Dr Paisley's concerns about security, resulting from abused heaped upon his protection officer by Alex Attwood and another SDLP representative who had tried to get into the Conference Room by the door immediately behind where he was making his protest. The Secretary of State took note.

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b. Paisley reported again on the "threat" that de Rossa had made about bodies in the street in the event of Mitchell not being made Chairman. He said he had reported this threat to the police. The Secretary of State said that he had mentioned this to de Rossa who had said that any remarks made had been completely misunderstood.

c. The Secretary of State confirmed that the Forum would be meeting on Friday with a start time of 2.00pm and with John Gorman in the Chair. Robinson said that he did not much like the seating arrangements. The Secretary of State said that it was not immediately clear how often the Forum would meet. In answer to a question from Paisley, he reported on the spinelessness of the Harbour Commissioners who had refused to make their building, which would have been ideal, available for the Forum for fear of political repercussions. This had the useful effect of producing some sympathetic outrage from Paisley.

d. Paisley said that he had observed that the British Flag had not been flying over Castle Building at the start of the Talks. He had enquired and discovered that the hoisting rope had broken. He had instructed those responsible to repair it and he was glad to see that this had been done!

f. Robinson complained that the 21 gun salute originally scheduled to take place on the grounds of Stormont had been shifted to Palace Barracks in order not to offend the Taoiseach or the Tanaiste.

13. On that not particularly serious note, the meeting ended with smiles and handshakes all round. In general, the mood had been entirely friendly after a slightly frosty start (not made any better

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by the fact that William McCrea's tea was stone cold). There was no sign of any significant shift in the DUP position, but personal relations appear to have been repaired, at least in part.

SIGNED

MARTIN HOWARD

PS/Secretary of State (L)

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