FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L)
17 June 1996

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
Mr Leach (B&L) - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Ray
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Cran - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
Mr Budd, Cab Office
Mr Holmes, No 10
HMA Dublin - B

Mr Hill - B

SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETINGS WITH THE UUP: 17 JUNE 1996

As he was leaving Castle Buildings shortly before lunchtime today, the Secretary of State was stopped in the corridor by David Trimble and Ken Maginnis asking for a meeting. As Trimble had to go back into the conference chamber, Ken Maginnis came by himself for a short discussion with the Secretary of State. It was also agreed that Trimble, Maginnis and Empey would call on the Secretary of State later at Stormont Castle.

2. Ken Maginnis said that the Manchester bombing had significantly changed the situation. It was highly relevant that this had occurred <u>after</u> the start of talks. In such circumstances, if Sinn Fein were to be brought in, the talks would break down. There had been a lot of support for the UUP's line in sticking with the talks despite their reservations about the Chairman. If they

had pulled out it is likely that the blame for the bombing would have fallen on them. His conclusion from all this was that Sinn Fein should be permanently excluded from the talks. He proposed to say the same both to the Irish Government and to Mitchell.

3. The Secretary of State said that he understood this position. The key objective was to not let Sinn Fein and the IRA off the hook. He agreed that in practice an early ceasefire was almost certainly not enough to get Sinn Fein into the talks. They needed to find words or deeds to produce the necessary trust. He had doubts about excluding them <u>permanently</u> in all circumstances. This would in effect disenfranchise the large number of people who had voted for them and who did not support violence. He also wondered what Ken Maginnis thought about reports that day of a possible split in the IRA. Maginnis said that the reports of the split were a facade. He acknowledged the possibility that the Republican movement would fragment but that this was a year down the road. What had been reported today was a classic hard ball/soft ball approach designed to exert blackmail on the Governments. On the question of excluding Sinn Fein, Maginnis said they should be 'out for the duration'.

4. The Secretary of State said that the Entry into Negotiations Act required him to issue an invitation if he considered that Sinn Fein had demonstrated its true commitment to democratic and peaceful methods. Maginnis agreed that politicians should not get into the position of using words like 'never'. He said that it had clearly been demonstrated that the process could not accommodate Sinn Fein. The Secretary of State said that the important thing to recognise was that we were in a viable political process. It could work without Sinn Fein in, though it would be better if they were included (Maginnis expressed doubts about this last point). It was not so much that the process could not accommodate Sinn Fein, it was more that Sinn Fein could not accommodate themselves to the process. Maginnis seemed to accept this.

5. The second meeting with Trimble, Maginnis and Empey took place after the Secretary of State's lunchtime doorstep. The Secretary of State opened the meeting by reporting what he had said to the press. He had strongly endorsed the Bruton line over the weekend that it was for Sinn Fein and the IRA to come up with the words and/or deeds to convince the people that they were serious about peaceful and democratic means. David Trimble said that from a tactical point of view he thought that there would come a point when we would have to say that Sinn Fein had excluded themselves for the duration of the talks. The Secretary of State repeated that it was for Sinn Fein to convince others. The important point was to keep the heat on them.

6. Ken Maginnis asked whether and when more stringent security measures would be introduced against the IRA. He wondered about the value of introducing ID cards which had been supported by Joe Hendron (this will not be unconnected with Hendron's continuing concerns about electoral fraud in West Belfast of course). The Secretary of State said that if he were advised that the introduction of ID cards would be of genuine help, then he would seriously consider it. It would however have to be UK wide and the advice he had received in the past was that without finger prints, they were of limited value.

7. Reg Empey then moved onto political matters. He said that the next 24 to 36 hours would see a crunch point on the procedural guidelines and the agenda. There was a real political imperative for the UUP to be seen to be securing changes to both to the rules and to the agenda. Both Governments had put the 6 June rules and agenda on the table, but had indicated that they would be prepared to look at alternatives. The bottom line for the UUP was that the Chairman's role and powers needed to be curtailed to some extent, though not to the level of ineffectiveness; and that decommissioning had to be dealt with earlier in the agenda. The UUP had put their heads on the block and were suffering a good deal of political abuse as a result. They needed to have something to show for it.

8. The Secretary of State, supported by Michael Ancram said that the Government believed it could be helpful on the points raised on the procedural guidelines. Trimble said that he thought the Irish Government would probably also be reasonable on this. Empey said that on the agenda, the UUP started from the communique of 28 February and in particular the timing of when decommissioning should be 'addressed'. They did not necessarily expect to resolve all the aspects of decommissioning at the plenary. But it would be intolerable to be having lengthy debates about other agenda items before decommissioning was looked at. Their interpretation of the 28 February communique was that the four issues of the Mitchell principles, decommissioning, the agenda and procedures should be dealt with at the same time.

9. Trimble agreed that the need for movement on these issues was a political imperative for the UUP. Decommissioning had to be addressed in a substantive manner. In particular there needed to be firm commitments as to means and timing of decommissioning. Clearly, without Sinn Fein there, the debate on this would be largely theoretical, though not totally so, given the presence of the loyalist parties. But there would need to be clear protocols about dealing with Sinn Fein should they try to re-enter the talks. Empey said that so long as the loyalists maintained their ceasefire we did not want to throw them out. Trimble agreed with this, but said that such a consequences might be a by-product of the discussions.

10. Maginnis said that the DUP and the UKUP wanted the loyalists out. He asked where we stood on legislation for decommissioning and in particular for the establishment of an International Verification Commission. He asked whether the Government had identified suitable staff for such a Commission, presumably under the Chairmanship of John de Chastelain. He set out his view that there had to be some benchmarking between political progress and physical progress on decommissioning. Trimble said that there needed to be some intermediate step between the Mitchell report itself and the actual

start of decommissioning, but he was deeply uneasy about the idea of a sub-committee of the plenary. He acknowledged the theoretical possibility that Sinn Fein might come back in, but he believed in practice the protocols should be designed in such a way as to keep them out.

11. Michael Ancram said that if we had moved through the plenary process, it would not be possible for us to undo all that and start again if Sinn Fein were to qualify for inclusion. They would have to sign up to what had been agreed during the plenary and to the undertakings made by others then. After a short exchange, Trimble seemed to acknowledge this.

12. The Secretary of State said that the Irish Government had been very robust in their public statements, but we were not sure what they would be doing next. Empey said that he thought the shooting of the Garda detective had been extremely significant from their point of view. The Secretary of State said that in terms of a robust security response, both Governments had kept the option of internment on their legislative books. Trimble then returned to the question of the loyalists. He said he didn't want them out, but what was decided on decommissioning had to bite. Maginnis said that the way forward might be to agree definite principles but that implementation may be on a 'pro-rata' basis. (Comment: I think what Ken Maginnis meant was that the loyalists would give an undertaking conditional upon parallel action by the IRA if and when the conditions existed for Sinn Fein to be re-admitted into the political talks.) Trimble was clearly uneasy about this. He said that the loyalists had a community of interest with the IRA. The Secretary of State is attempting to defuse this disagreement pointing to what Senator Mitchell had said in his report about 'mutuality'.

13. Ken Maginnis said that if we were to show an imaginative response to the loyalists while they were in talks, this would need to be matched by strong actions against the IRA outside the talks. There had to be a penalty on the IRA. The Secretary of State said

that he relied on the advice of the Chief Constable who was not known for being backward in coming forward. Maginnis, with his prejudices about the Chief Constable to the fore, expressed some doubt about this. He said that we could certainly get more information about IRA terrorists if we tried. The Chief Constable should be encouraged to investigate unsolved crimes and pull some of the ring leaders in. The Special Branch remained a weak area in the RUC.

14. Reg Empey then returned discussion to the question of procedures and agenda for the talks. The Secretary of State said again that he thought it would be possible to make some progress on the procedural guidelines, though it would be more difficult to do anything about the agenda. He recognised however the need for the UUP to show progress.

15. Trimble also raised one or two points on the Forum, which I have recorded separately.

Comment

16. A friendly and reasonably constructive meeting, though with real concerns expressed by the UUP about needing to show some reward for the political risks they had taken last week. As expected, they took a hard line on Sinn Fein, though just about avoided saying that they should be excluded from talks for all time. They acknowledged the wisdom of the Secretary of State in saying that they key thing in the immediate term was to keep Sinn Fein firmly on the back foot.

(Signed)

MARTIN HOWARD
Private Secretary (L)