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POLITICAL AFFAIR
DIVISION
20 JUN 1996
NIO BELFAST

FROM: D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
20 JUNE 1996

Revised CC list

cc	PS/Secretary of State(L+B)	-B
	PS/Michael Ancram(L+B)	-B
	PS/Sir David Fell	-B
	Mr Leach(L+B)	-B
	Mr Watkins	-B
	Mr Stephens	-B
	Mr Lavery	-B
	Mr Maccabe	-B
	Mr Whysall(L+B)	-B
	Miss Harrison(L+B)	-B

Mr Thomas(L) -B

GROUND RULES/RULES OF PROCEDURE

I attach a slightly revised version of the statement HMG might make when the proposed rules of procedure (as expanded) are adopted, to explain our position on the status of the Ground Rules.

2. I will let the Irish have a copy, without commitment.

(Signed)

D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
EXT CB 22317

J. McKEVILL
P. McNITH
J. BLACK
A. McVEIGH 25/6

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(20 June revise)

POSSIBLE STATEMENT ON THE STATUS OF THE GROUND RULES

The British Government welcomes agreement on rules of procedure for these negotiations which constitute a single source of reference for the operational conduct of our proceedings.

We welcome the convergence demonstrated during discussion of the various papers tabled by delegations last Friday and, as I indicated previously, we were entirely content to withdraw the Procedural Guidelines circulated by the two Governments on 6 June and work instead on the composite draft circulated by the Independent Chairmen on 18 June.

We have now between us developed the rules of procedure to the point where all delegations are satisfied that they constitute a full, complete and self-contained statement and that the proceedings can now, in an operational sense, be taken forward on that basis without reference to any other document. The British Government welcomes that.

For our part, we continue to regard the Ground Rules as the essential basis for the negotiations and as the legal basis to the extent that that is necessary as a consequence of the references to the Ground Rules in the Northern Ireland (Entry to Negotiations etc) Act. Equally we continue to hold to the view which (as Mr Peter Robinson reminded us last week) I expressed in the House of Commons

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5 during the debates on the Entry to Negotiations Act that the conduct of the negotiations is, as the Ground Rules themselves acknowledge, "exclusively a matter for those involved in the negotiations".

We are all now, as I understand it, ready to proceed to conduct negotiations of the character referred to in the Ground Rules on the basis of the Rules of Procedure now before us. That is a necessary, important and positive achievement. I acknowledge the constructive role which all delegations have played in bringing that about, and the role of Senator Mitchell in leading the discussions which have produced this result. The British Government delegation looks forward to real engagement on the substance of the important issues which now fall to be addressed.

PS/Sir John Wheeler (L+B) -B
PS/Michael Anderson (L+B) -B

Mr. Hill (L+B) -B
Mr. Parris -B
Mr. Stephens -B
Ms. Oakesfield -B
Miss Harrison (L+B) -B
Ms. Mapstone -B
Mr. Whyteall (L+B) -B
Ms. Collins, Cab Off (via IFL) -B
Mr. O'Mahony, TAU -B
Mr. Lamont, RID -B
HMA Dublin -B
Mr. Westmacott, (via RID) -B
Mr. Campbell-Bannerman
(w/o enclosure) -B
Mrs McNally (L+B) -B

File Note

TALKS: CONFERING ON PROCEDURAL RULES - 18 AND 19 JUNE

Summary

A Party in (no fact) two parts. Considerable progress was made on rules of procedure in a series of constructive exchanges round the table in the afternoon of 18 June. Robert McCartney thrust himself upon the scene but ended up being seduced by the intellectual challenge posed by the issue of "moderation". On the Wednesday however, Peter Robinson forced the meeting to address the

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