C O N F I D E N T I A L

Ulster Unionist Party/H.M.G.
Bilateral 18/11/96

Present :David Trimble
Ken Maginnis
Jeffrey Donaldson
Peter King
Peter Weir

Secretary of State
Minister for Political Development
Civil Servants

DT complained that he was not being kept "up to speed" with the "other show in town" ie governmental contacts with SF/IRA via SDLP. DT also questioned S of S as to why a statement of the governments' position had not been made as was agreed six weeks ago. S of S assured all that the government position would not change : "Absolutely nothing said to Hulme that constitutes a change in our position [re. ceasefire criteria]."

There had been no indications from SF acording to S of S.

"The Irish view is that these guys should be admitted to take the Six Principles and then the whole thing is put on ice." - S of S

S of S then went on to tell DT that he had unique access to PM. DT claimed that PM had been avoiding him and that the first statement mooted six weeks ago had been changed. S of S denied this and the allegation that the Manchester speech was a reply to SF - S of S had read MMs' Tralee speech in the paper like everyone else.

Moving on to the possibility of SF entery S of S stated that he knew that the process could go on without SF but did we really want Sf in ? DT replied that if there is a transition to exclusively peaceful

methods of constitutional politics then it is beneficial to bring them in. However he felt that they would not make the transition this year. S of S stated that he wanted talks with or without SF.

The conversation turned to the question of movement in the talks. MA came out with the truism that only when both governments and UUP/SDLP agreed there could be progress. Could UUP think of any decommissioning formula that could simultaneously satisfy those four parties. MA then went on to describe current government thinking on decommisioning :

"We set up an inchoate commission which begins work as we movev into the strands. It has a defined remit - to look at schemes, what was necessary, have an input into the regulations. It would begin the process when it can, when those people are in. It would have a duty to make a judgement as to when decommissioning starts. It would have a liason committee with a feed back capability. It would, that is the liason committee, provide for two way traffic."

MA continued that they were looking at the mechanics but pointed out that there may be a price to pay for the inchoate commission and that price may be the liason committee.

When asked how the government scheme differed from that of the UUP a Civil Servant answered that it did not provide for an initial tranche of weapons to be handed over nor stipulate stages of decommissioning. DT clarified that a tranche was only required before SF entery not prior to others commencing the three strands. The Civil Servant continued that the liason committe would not, indeed could not, exclude bilaterals with the inchoate commission. MA interjected that government thinking saw the Mitchell Report as a vehicle.

Regarding the UK enabling legislation S of S said that the government was looking at extending it to GB :

"I am almost sure we are going to do this"

MA steered the conversation back to enery requirements saying the Irish are having a lot of difficulty with this issue. As to what was expected from any new ceasefire, S of S indicated that he was reluctant to set out a list of deeds as well as words. He felt that he would be fettering his discretion as to how para 8 was to be employed leaving the way open for Judicial Review.

DT said UUP needed an insurance policy against HMG changing its' mind or simply changing.

Returning to SF, KM stated that at present we did not want them in; a case of in theory yes, but in reality no.

DT stated that the NIOs' perception amongst Loyalist prisoners was crucial to theie ceasefire - the Manchester speech sent out all the wrong messages.

S of S returned to decommissioning. He recognised that UUP needed cover, but the Irish felt that we were in a ratchet process - one thing after another. Indeed S of S felt that the Irish may feel that UUP do not want SF in at any price. Fine Gael are being told they are being suckered. They require an assurance that UUP will "go hunting".

PW commented that the government scheme did not cover entery requirements. MA replied that if we wanted a process we must seek sufficient consensus.

S of S wound up :

"I need to be able to say that an inchoate commission will bring you into the process."