

CONFIDENTIAL

D. Humeach

to see please

for 31/1/96

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EST
PSS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MR F MURRAY
MR P TEAHON
MR S DONLON
MR T DALTON

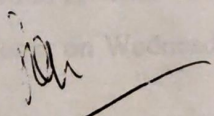
Mr. Humeach / Mr. T. Dalton

SDLP Meeting with Prime Minister Major

S. 11. 1. 2. 96.

1. I spoke by phone to Seamus Mallon this morning on the above.
2. He said it had been a difficult meeting in every sense. The atmosphere was extremely frigid to start with. Major had taken particular exception to some remark of Mallon on the media, which implied that he (Major) was "telling lies". Mallon reacted strongly, as did Hume, and gave as good as they got. Mallon thought Major was particularly wounded by a comment that the reaction in the nationalist community was all the stronger because people had trusted Major, and were surprised to find their trust misplaced.
3. The meeting then shifted to the proposal for an election. Hume gave a scathing analysis of the implications of the proposal (time wasting, breach of faith, walking away from commitment to talks, inherently damaging to negotiating prospects, etc).
4. The SDLP then put a series of questions forcefully to Major:
 - Was the only purpose of the election to have negotiators elected? (Major : Yes).
 - It had no other purpose ? (Major : No).
 - There would be all-party talks immediately after the election? (Major : Yes, not in the first day or two but the week after).

- How could Major deliver the unionists after an election, if he was incapable of delivering of them before? (Major : His perception was that Trimble would buy his package. He would consult with Trimble and come back to the SDLP).
 - Would the unionists enter the negotiations process, just go through the motions, and then say nothing would happen until decommissioning? (Major : That was the idea in the Mitchell Report).
5. The SDLP also pressed him for a pledge that the three-stranded approach would be respected in its integrity, as in the Brooke talks. Major agreed.
 6. The SDLP delegation concluded by repeating again the difficulties they saw in an elective process and the total backing they would have from the nationalist community in Northern Ireland "if we refused to fight your f - election".
 7. Major promised he would come back to them at a further meeting, within the next fortnight, to reassure them on the points raised. Mallon said they would want the commitment to all-party talks in writing.


Sean Ó hUiginn

31 January 1996