

FROM: PUS

26 JUNE 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
 PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
 PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
 PS/Sir David Fell - B
 Mr Legge - B
 Mr Steele - B
 Mr Ray - B
 Mr Bell - B
 Mr Leach (L&B) - B
 Mr Stephens - B
 Mr Hill (L&B) - B
 Mr Perry - B
 Mr Maccabe - B
 Mr Beeton - B
 Mr Lavery - B
 Ms Checksfield - B
 Miss Harrison (L&B) - B
 Mr Whysall (L&B) - B
 Mr Cran - B

MR THOMAS (L&B) - B

BILATERAL WITH THE TAOISEACH

I should welcome a word about the commission in Martin Howard's minute of 26 June, following up the account of the dialogue between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach on 22 June in Florence.

2. Apart from the sensitivity vis à vis the Unionists to which Martin Howard rightly draws attention, I am concerned myself at the possibility that the Taoiseach, while not binning the Framework Document, is actually retreating from the absolutely fundamental issues of Irish recognition of Northern Ireland's status, and the constitutional claim in the Irish Constitution. If, as I hope, the Taoiseach's interest in symbolic and psychological steps is additional to essential progress on the constitutional questions, then fine. But picking up the recent minutes by Peter Bell and David Hill on the constitutional issue, I am sure we must be alert to any attempt to divert attention away from that agenda. I very much doubt if that is the Taoiseach's intention, but there are those in his government and in the Irish Government machine who could seek to exploit it in that way.

Signed

JOHN CHILCOT

26 JUNE 1996

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