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② file 29/7.

✓  
Savage preaching  
time again -  
29/7

From: EDWARD OAKDEN

Date: 26 July 1996

PRIME MINISTER

cc: MR HOLMES  
MR HASLAM  
MRS CLEAVER

**NORTHERN IRELAND: UPDATE: FRIDAY**

No meeting of the plenary today. It reconvenes in Belfast on Monday, when Mitchell hopes that the rules of procedure will be finally adopted. ✓

The action today moved to a Mayhew/Trimble meeting in London over the vexed question of how to deal with decommissioning during the plenary. ✓

The UUP's concern is that sufficient progress should have been made - and be seen to have been made - on decommissioning before the plenary breaks into talks on the separate strands. They also want machinery in place to catch Sinn Fein if by any chance the latter manage to re-enter the talks. ✓

This is correspondingly neuralgic for the SDLP, who see it as a new pre-condition to the start of talks, and as giving the Unionists a veto on the latter. ✓

The UUP position has been that a sub-committee should work through August on decommissioning, so that it can present at least an interim report to the plenary by mid-September. Only once this report had been agreed and presented to plenary could the three-stranded talks begin. ✓



Trimble's meeting with Paddy Mayhew today went round and round the houses  
... on this. I attach the record, but do not suggest you read it unless you need a  
mogadon substitute. By the end, two options had been identified which both  
Trimble and Mayhew were prepared to explore further:

- to establish twin target dates: the first for agreeing the handling of  
decommissioning, and the second for the start of substantive talks.
- that the plenary should break for the summer next week,  
immediately it has agreed its rules of procedure, agenda and  
business committee; and reconvene in September with opening  
statements as the first item, and decommissioning only following  
thereafter.

Trimble agreed that this second option looked increasingly attractive, as it  
should ensure that the talks get underway again in the autumn without running  
straight into the decommissioning block. It was left that both sides would think  
further about these two options.

The second option does have attractions, in that it takes the process into the  
autumn. We shall face the same substantive problem then, namely how to  
address the Unionist insistence that a complete decommissioning scheme be in  
place before the negotiations move out of plenary. But one fence at a time.

Edward.

EDWARD OAKDEN