

CONFIDENTIAL

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
TEAM

-1 OCT 1996

RECEIVED

FROM: J A STEPHENS
IPL DIVISION
1 OCTOBER 1996

cc: PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)	- B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B)	- B
PS/PUS (L&B)	- B
PS/Sir David Fell	- B
Mr Thomas	- B
Mr Bell	- B
Mr Leach	- B
Mr Ray	- B
Mr Steele	- B
Mr Watkins	- B
Mr Wood (L&B)	- B
Mr Beeton	- B
Mr Hill (L&B)	- B
Mr Lavery	- B
Mr Maccabe	- B
Mr Perry	- B
Miss Bharucha	- B
Ms Mapstone	- B
Mr Budd, Cabinet Office	- F
HMA Dublin	- F
Mr Lamont, RID	- B

Ant.
Ms B...
28
945

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

HUME TEXT: SUGGESTIONS FROM THE IRISH

John Holmes' two letters of 30 September recorded Paddy Teahon's and John Hume's views on the text given to Mr Hume.

2. I attach a draft letter to No 10 which offers advice on the textual suggestions made by Teahon, floats a suggestion of our own (about a positive reference to the loyalist ceasefire) and offers further advice on timing.

SIGNED

JONATHAN STEPHENS
International and Planning Division
OAB Ext 6587

CONFIDENTIAL

IPL/TAD/26622

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

September 1996

HUME TEXT: IRISH SUGGESTIONS

Thank you for your two letters of 30 September, giving Paddy Teahon's and John Hume's reactions to the text sent to Hume.

Text

We have said the text is not for negotiation. Nevertheless, it is our text and if there are changes which seem helpful we can make them, providing always the text remains clearly within the ambit of existing policy.

On that basis, Teahon's suggestions (ii) - (iv) are straightforward and could be incorporated without risking criticism:

- a reference to the three strands would be entirely orthodox;
- the Irish suggestion on timeframe steers clear of an imposed timeframe, while beefing up somewhat the encouragement to the parties to agree a timeframe. That causes us no difficulties - indeed, the Government would not wish to pretend that it is neutral on whether the process moves forward speedily or slowly. (The publication today of our proposal on decommissioning also means we can now disclose December as the time we have proposed for a review plenary);

CONFIDENTIAL

IPL/TAD/26622

CONFIDENTIAL

- a neutral reference to the cultural traditions of both communities is also unexceptional and in line with existing policy commitments, although Teahon's suggested text could do with some amendment.

None of these could be read as making significant changes to the text. But we think there is a good case for taking these points on board - as in the amended text attached. Doing so will help keep the Irish Government (and, through them, the US) on board. They can be defended as in line with existing policy. They will not unbalance the text as a whole.

In addition, we have had a further thought on the text ourselves, which we think will improve it. As it stands, the text has no reference to the loyalist ceasefire. Loyalists think they have not received enough credit for maintaining their ceasefire. In the wake of the comments by loyalist prisoners on Monday, a positive reference would seem both topical and sensible. We have suggested a short addition to the third paragraph of the text for this purpose - also incorporated in the draft attached. This has the added advantage of being a change to the text which does not emanate from an Irish suggestion.

Teahon's first suggestion, on decommissioning, raises deeper issues. He is somewhat disingenuous to describe his suggested deletion as purely tactical. While Irish Ministers are signed up to our view that Mitchell's compromise approach clearly involves some decommissioning during negotiations, some Irish officials have advanced the view that paragraph 34 of the Mitchell report only recommends that parties should consider such an approach. Sinn Féin may therefore hope that in negotiations they could get away with simply discussing the subject without there ever being any actual decommissioning.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Teahon's analysis may well be right: Sinn Féin will have extreme difficulty in signing up to parallel decommissioning up front. The best hope of securing any actual decommissioning does seem to lie in first securing some political progress. But, equally, we must not appear to confirm Sinn Féin's hope that they could get away with only discussing decommissioning, when we know that is wholly unrealistic given unionist positions (and our own).

The sentence Teahon suggested we delete makes clear our view of what Mitchell recommended. It is true that it does not appear in the joint proposal now circulated to all parties - that is because the joint proposal quotes the whole of paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Mitchell report. That is not possible in this article. Simple deletion is unacceptable because it would send the wrong message. But it would be possible to stick even more closely to the text of the Mitchell report, so making it more difficult for the Irish to cavil at the paragraph. It might read as follows:

"Among the crucial issues is decommissioning. The opening plenary will address the International Body's proposals on decommissioning of illegal arms. In their report, the International Body said the parties should consider an approach under which some decommissioning would take place during the process of all party negotiations. We support this compromise approach. So we, along with the Irish Government, will be looking for the commitment of all participants to work constructively during the negotiations to implement all aspects of the International Body's report. We want to make urgent progress in this area ..."

In the attached text, this is incorporated in square brackets as an alternative to the existing paragraph.

If we do make any of these changes to the text sent ^{to} by Hume, we should do so entirely on our own account and not show the text outside of Government for further comment until it is sent for publication.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Timing

As you say, publishing the text when the UUP are in rejectionist mode carries dangers (although last week Mr Trimble was taken through the main points without registering concern). It is not clear when - if at all - there will be a better environment.

Hume says he expects Sinn Féin's definitive response next Monday. Since the reason for any article is to answer what questions Sinn Féin have, there is a case for waiting to hear their response. But assuming next week is ruled out, that delays publication until the week beginning 14 October, with some increased risk of a leak (although there are indications Sinn Féin are themselves keen to avoid early publication and so would seem unlikely to leak it). Having got Sinn Féin's response, we would also have to decide how to deal with it.

So there is a choice between publication this week - say, Thursday or Friday - or leaving it for some 10 days or so. We shall need to keep this under close review.

As to Teahon's musings as to whether Sinn Féin might declare a ceasefire and then try not to enter the talks, that would seem a perverse strategy. It was the strain of maintaining a ceasefire while there was no political process for Sinn Féin to participate in, which proved unbearable in February. If Sinn Féin decide they don't want to be in the talks, then the IRA leadership looks to have little to gain by declaring a ceasefire. But other parts of Teahon's thesis look more plausible. The SDLP is very worried about remaining in negotiations without any ostensible sign of progress - Mallon has talked in public of the end of October as a deadline. They are also fearful that Sinn Féin will overtake them electorally

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- though the evidence is by no means clear cut. It may well be that the Sinn Féin leadership reckon a ceasefire would improve their electoral prospects - but whether they could deliver one in a vacuum, without a political process in being, is uncertain.

A copy goes to William Ehrman and Jan Polley.

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

Under the legislation setting up the talks, if the Government considered that there was an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Féin would be invited to join the team to participate in the negotiations. We would of course want to be sure that any restoration was genuinely unequivocal, particularly in view of events on the ground. Beyond that, both the British and Irish Governments are agreed that these negotiations are without preconditions.

CONFIDENTIAL