

POLDEVT 983 ~~44~~ 11.3 SEP 96

CONFIDENTIAL

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT
TEAM
10 SEP 1996
RECEIVED

FROM: ANITA BHARUCHA
IPL
10 SEPTEMBER 1996

*Briefing for the
file*

- cc PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
- PS/Sir J Wheeler (L&B) - B
- PS/PUS (L&B) - B
- PS/Sir D Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Ray - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Hill - B
- Mr Perry - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Mr Lavery - B
- Mr Whysall - B

DMG →

1. MR STEPHENS [JAS 10/9/96]
2. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

BRIEFING FOR SENATOR MITCHELL'S CALL ON THE PM, THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER, 0900

I attach a self-explanatory letter for you to send to John Holmes in reply to his letter of 3 September. I understand that the Secretary of State will also attend this meeting.

SIGNED

A BHARUCHA
Room 1/118
Ext OAB/6503

CONFIDENTIAL

DU/TPU/2235

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT

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

September 1996

SENATOR MITCHELL

I attach briefing for Senator Mitchell's call on the Prime Minister at 0900 on Thursday 12 September. My Secretary of State will also be present.

You also asked about the provision of regular updates on the talks. We produce a substantial internal note of developments in the talks, which you would probably not wish to be burdened with; but also, generally, at daily intervals, a summary report on progress. It ought to be available by late morning of the following day, usually earlier. We will happily put you on the circulation list for such notes. When there are developments of particular importance to draw to the Prime Minister's attention, we shall, of course, continue to brief you by phone.

W K LINDSAY

CONFIDENTIAL

DU/TPU/2235

CONFIDENTIAL

CALL BY SENATOR MITCHELL, 0900, THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER

The Prime Minister last met Senator Mitchell at the launch of the multi-party talks on 10 June 1996. Subsequently, the Prime Minister wrote to Senator Mitchell on 29 July on the death of his brother.

Objectives

2. Objectives for the meeting might be:

- to reaffirm the Prime Minister's personal commitment to the talks process;
- to restate HMG's commitment to making progress in the talks;
- to hear Senator Mitchell's own views on how the resumption of the talks has gone;
- to express appreciation for Senator Mitchell's involvement as he resumes the chairmanship for what is likely to be another difficult round.

A speaking note is at Annex A.

Resumption of talks

(i) Loyalists

3. The Talks resumed on 9 September with the DUP seeking as expected to have the PUP and UDP excluded from the talks; Dr Paisley and Mr McCartney indicated that their parties would leave the talks if the Loyalists did not. The DUP's "Notice of Indictment" was circulated to parties and the UDP and PUP issued a response. Most of 10 September was spent in debate and "cross-examination" of the UDP and PUP.

CONFIDENTIAL

DU/TPU/2235

DU/TPU/2235

CONFIDENTIAL

Apart from the DUP and UKUP, other parties wish to see the loyalists remain in negotiations, believing they have done enough to distance themselves from the CLMC threat, counter it and reaffirm their commitment to the Mitchell principles. The two Governments are seeking to agree a response along these lines, to be delivered on Wednesday.

(ii) Decommissioning

4. However, despite the protracted wrangling over the position of the two Loyalist parties, on which the press has focussed, there are encouraging signs that progress is being made between the UUP and the SDLP in seeking a common approach to the agenda for the resumed Opening Plenary and developing a strategy for progressing the decommissioning issue. In broad terms, the UUP seem to have shifted to accept that agreement now on a cut and dried decommissioning scheme is unrealistic. Instead, they and the SDLP seem prepared to accept:

- a formal discussion of decommissioning in the opening plenary, over perhaps a week;
- during this, the UUP would seek a private trilateral meeting with HMG and the Irish Government;
- the UUP would seek reassurances from the Governments on the decommissioning legislation, its timing, the nature of the International Verification Commission and the likely modalities;
- the plenary discussion would end with agreement on a decommissioning sub-committee to run in parallel with the three strands.

5. The UUP and SDLP are also in discussion about the agenda for the rest of the opening plenary and will be trying to agree a common approach over the next few days.

CONFIDENTIAL

14902

CONFIDENTIAL

6. The reason for this change of approach by the UUP is unclear - it is possible that the leadership have had second thoughts after Drumcree, or that the change is a result of internal UUP politics, or that, contrary to expectations, Trimble sees flexibility as the key to increasing electoral support. It is, however, a positive development as it offers a way of making progress on the decommissioning issue, while giving reassurance to Unionists. Both governments have agreed to encourage this initiative, although noting that this approach is somewhat vague and uncertain at the present, and problems may become apparent at a later date.

A Successor to Senator Mitchell?

7. There has been some speculation in the press that Senator Mitchell will leave the talks to take up a post in the Clinton administration, if the Democrats win the forthcoming US election. Senator Mitchell responded by issuing a press statement on 9 September which stated, 'Such speculation is unfounded and untrue'. Senator Mitchell has said on several occasions that he is willing to stay involved in the talks for as long as this is helpful - see for example Mr Westmacott's letter to Mr Holmes of 4 September reporting his private talk with Senator Mitchell. It is, however, unlikely that Senator Mitchell would decline if he was offered a position in a second Clinton administration. If Senator Mitchell does raise with the Prime Minister the possibility that he will not continue as Chairman if there is a Democrat victory, the Prime Minister may wish to explore with him the question of a successor.

CONFIDENTIAL

14902
2112-98

CONFIDENTIAL

RECEIVED
SEP 15 1998

ANNEX A

SPEAKING NOTE

- sincere condolences again on the sad death of your brother;
- grateful to you for coming today;
- very grateful for the investment you personally have made in this process; your handling of the parties and the negotiations has been skilful throughout;
- talks have resumed after a summer which exposed once again the deep divisions in NI society;
- those events have highlighted the need for a talks process, and have made need for progress more urgent;
- need to encourage all parties to see that these talks are the best way forward for NI;
- determined to seize window of opportunity between now and December (when, inevitably, parties will become distracted by election campaign) to make progress;
- need to work, with Irish Government, to raise parties' confidence in process and in the governments themselves;
- hope that can now move on from the debate over the position of the Loyalist parties into substance - vital for real progress to be made, and to be seen to be made;
- encouraged by dialogue between UUP and SDLP; believe UUP proposal is a constructive way forward;
- interested to have your views on this, and more generally; mood at talks?