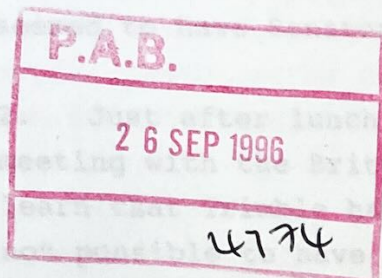


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FROM: J MCKERVILL
TALKS SECRETARIAT
25 SEPTEMBER 1996



cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS, DOE & L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI & L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Leach (B&L) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Priestly - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Stephens - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (B&L) - B
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - B
Mr Dickinson, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

Handwritten signature: M. H. [unclear]
Handwritten note: (26/9)

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: WEDNESDAY 25 SEPTEMBER

A relatively slow day, during which the Chairmen engaged with the smaller parties in bilateral meetings to reassure them of the extensive work being carried out by both Governments in trying to resolve the decommissioning issue, thereby allowing the talks to enter the three stranded negotiation. Meanwhile during the course of the morning British and Irish officials had a useful meeting to discuss the arrangements for making available technical expertise

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and independent experts to the proposed decommissioning committee. At that meeting the Irish confirmed an absolute block on the duality of one person chairing both the International Commission and Strand II negotiations. Irish officials, however, said they would be prepared for General de Chastelain to chair the International Commission if a new chairman could be found for Strand II. They seemed to have Senator Mitchell in mind for the latter.

2. Just after lunch, the Secretary of State returned from his meeting with the British Irish Inter-parliamentary Body in Bath to learn that Trimble had left to travel to London. It was therefore not possible to have a meeting today to discuss the final text of the "conclusions" paper which, during the day, the Irish had given their assent for the Secretary of State to show to the UUP leader. Despite leaving a number of messages throughout the afternoon with Trimble's office in London, the UUP leader failed to make contact to arrange a meeting to discuss the 'Conclusions' paper.

3. In the afternoon the Secretary of State also met the SDLP delegation, led by John Hume, beginning at 15.50. Mark Durkan reported that the SDLP had held a meeting with the UUP earlier in the day when, it became clear to the SDLP, that the UUP seemed to be looking for more than they had previously led the SDLP to believe, in order to allow the launch of the three stranded negotiations. While the UUP professed their determination to get into the three stranded negotiations, the SDLP had gained the impression that the UUP were continually raising the bar. For example, Durkan said they were now talking of the appointment of personnel to the Commission before 3 stranded negotiations could begin. While the UUP denied that this was a pre-condition, nonetheless they could not see any reason why this could not be put in place. On the agenda for the substantive negotiations, the UUP were now saying that a few changes might be required although the SDLP's view was that an agreement with the UUP was still possible.

4. In response the Secretary of State described dealing with the

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UUP as trying to get to grips with a cloud. Nonetheless he believed, by not more than a narrowish margin, that the UUP were for real although he quite understood the perception of others who believed they were being made the subject of a clever con. Both Governments had been trying to respond to the reasonable requests of the Unionists and had worked exceedingly hard to meet their needs. The UUP had not told either Government that they were looking for appointments to the Commission but rather "continuity" between now and when the respective pieces of legislation were in place.

5. The Secretary of State reported that both Governments had agreed on "conclusions" on addressing decommissioning which he hoped to show Trimble shortly. These conclusions were not for further bargaining and, if rejected, then the issue would have to go into open plenary. As the SDLP would themselves recognise, Trimble was under pressure not just from the DUP and UKUP but from others within his own party. He did not know if Trimble was man enough to stand up to that pressure or not. He hoped however that Trimble would accept what was on offer and reassured the SDLP that he would do his utmost to persuade the UUP leader to do so.

6. At 16.50 the Secretary of State had a meeting with the Irish delegation led by Minister Coveney. The Secretary of State reported that, because of Trimble's departure for London, it had not been possible to hand over to Trimble yet a copy of the "conclusions" paper. He proposed to speak to Trimble by telephone and arrange for a copy of the paper to be delivered to him either later that day or the following day. Thereafter he hoped it would be possible to arrange a meeting with Trimble before the meeting of the UUP Executive Council scheduled for the weekend. The Secretary of State also asked, and the Irish agreed, that it would be proper to give a copy of the paper to the Independent Chairman.

7. A meeting with Senator Mitchell and General de Chastelain followed immediately after, at which the Secretary of State handed copies of the "conclusions" paper to the Independent Chairmen saying

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it was maddening that it had not been possible to get hold of Trimble, despite the laying of a number of traps to discuss it with him. He reported to the Chairmen that he hoped to get the paper to Trimble either later that day or the following day and to see him before the UUP Executive Council meeting. When he saw him, the Secretary of State would tell Trimble that much hard work had gone into the paper; it was a very reasonable package; and it was not for further bargaining. Senator Mitchell wished the Secretary of State luck in dealing with the UUP leader who, he recognised, was under considerable pressure from the other Unionist parties and within his own ranks.

8. Senator Mitchell reported on the bilaterals he had been holding during the day. All the parties, with the exception of the DUP and UKUP, had accepted that there was no need for a further plenary that day, recognising the importance of the work both Governments were engaged in with the UUP. The DUP and UKUP on the other hand, keen to intimidate Trimble, were strongly urging a plenary meeting which, the Senator remarked, he hoped to delay until Tuesday of the following week.

9. Finally, on a personal note, Senator Mitchell confirmed American newspaper reports that the President had asked him to assist in the preparations for the presidential television debates, scheduled at the moment for 6 and 16 October. As a consequence he would be absent from the talks for a few weeks but would return as soon as possible. The Secretary of State acknowledged that this was something the Senator had to do. The meeting ended with an inconclusive discussion of whether the talks should be held the week beginning 7 October, given the clash with the Pittsburgh Investment Conference and also the Conservative Party Conference. It was tentatively agreed that talks could go ahead with officials representing the Government where necessary.

(Signed)

J MCKERVILL

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