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18 September 1996

cc PS/Secretary of State (B,T&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B,T&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Steele o/r - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Leach (B&L) - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
Mrs Evans, HOLAB - Fax
Mr Carter, HOLAB - Fax

cc AB
JM.

**NOTE OF MEETINGS WITH THE ULSTER UNIONISTS TO DISCUSS THE DRAFT
DECOMMISSIONING BILL - 17 SEPTEMBER 1996**

General

Two very useful meetings in very relaxed, non-combative atmosphere, between NIO officials and leading members of UUP to take the latter through the detailed provisions of the British draft Decommissioning Bill.

Detail

2. Two meeting (because of UUP time constraints) were held on 17 September between NIO officials (Messrs Hill, Perry, Margetts and Maye) and David Trimble, Ken Maginnis, Reg Empey, Alan MacFarland, Jeffrey Donaldson and others (unidentified) of the UUP. The purpose of these meetings was to show the UUP our draft Decommissioning bill

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and take them through its provisions (they had separate, but equally amicable and useful meetings with the Irish to discuss their Bill).

3. The UUP members understood that they were being shown the Bill in confidence and were advised that they could not take copies away with them. They then settled down to 15 minutes silent perusal of the Bill which culminated in a full, frank but friendly discussion of the decommissioning issue. The main points upon which the UUP dwelt were:-

- (a) The non-statutory nature of a British decommissioning scheme as opposed to the requirement that an Irish scheme be approached by the Dail, and the length of the amnesty period.
- (b) The methods of decommissioning - on which they were assured that these were as envisaged by the International Body but were not exhaustive.
- (c) The "self-destruction" option (Clause 3(1)(d)) needed a requirement that there be verification of such destruction.
- (d) The possibility that state agencies or others might seek to impede the work of the Commission - thus there was a need for the Commission to be given powers of entry.
- (e) The question of terrorist arms etc, held in GB - what was to be done about them; why didn't the Bill cover those jurisdictions as well.
- (f) The fact that the forensic testing prohibition meant that intelligence material could not be gathered - had this been cleared with the RUC? They could waste a lot of time attempting to clear up crimes without being aware that the main evidence for those crimes had been legally handed in and destroyed.

- (g) The shape and size of the Commission, its functions and its moment of creation.

4. The Unionists majored on this last point, bringing in the question of a "core Commission" being involved in the development of a scheme. It transpired later, when the Secretary of State and Michael Ancram joined the meeting, that they were not only concerned that a scheme should be worked up by those who would implement it, but that their real concern was with the length of time it would take to work up a scheme even if Sinn Fein were fully on board. There was no hope of decommissioning in parallel with talks negotiations if a scheme was not speedily available for early implementation. The Secretary of State took note of this and accepted that there might be a case for an "inchoate Commission" in advance of the fully fledged variety.

(Signed)

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NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALES, 12 SEPTEMBER: SUMMARY

A full record of today's meetings is in preparation. This note provides a summary of the main events of the day.

At the plenary meeting at 12.30, chaired by George Mitchell, the Alliance Party's submission on breaches of the Mitchell principles and respective remedies were considered. Aislinne spoke on the submission and, while she asserted that the fourth principle had been

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