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No. 9977 P. 3/7
NO. 638 1202

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Edward Oakden Esq
Private Secretary to the
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

August 1996

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

Thank you for your letter of 26 July. Your detailed probing of Hume helped to clarify a number of important points of detail. In the light of that, this note offers further advice which you may wish to bear in mind if Hume rings again.

What is Adams offering?

You got Hume to make clear that Adams was offering to "try to persuade" the IRA to respond to any statement by declaring a ceasefire, rather than guaranteeing an IRA ceasefire.

This would make a difference to us if we were offering a concession in return for a ceasefire. But we are not: all that is on offer is established policy, which we would want to set out in public whether there was a prospect of a ceasefire or not.

It still remains the case, from what you established with Hume, that the IRA's response to any statement would be known before the statement was made.

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No. 9977 P. 4/7
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Time frame

It is good news that Hume has got the message that any sort of fixed deadline for the talks is impossible. Whether we wanted one or not, we simply could not deliver the participants.

Since Hume is arguing our case for us, we can sit tight and wait to see if he returns to the subject. If he does, however, there are some possibilities (all falling short of definitive time limits) which have already been floated which are worth bearing in mind:

- on 6 June, the two Governments proposed that the Business Committee of the negotiations drew up an indicative calendar for the negotiations;
- recently, Trimble has proposed "twin target dates" for a report on decommissioning and the launch of the three strands;
- in their proposal of 24 July, both Governments proposed a firm date (16 September) for the start of three stranded negotiations and, in parallel, the establishment of agreed machinery to carry forward work on decommissioning.

None of these proposals have been adopted, because of various objections. But they illustrate that there are some possibilities short of binding time limits.

Teahon recorded that Sinn Féin's pre-occupation with a time frame was specifically linked to decommissioning (John

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Holmes' letter of 22 July). If you get a chance, it would be helpful to see if Hume shares this view.

Decommissioning

This is clearly the most important issue. It is worth recalling what our public position is:

- all participants must sign up to the Mitchell principles at the beginning of negotiations (which include commitments to total and verifiable disarmament);
- the Mitchell proposals on decommissioning must also be addressed at the beginning of negotiations, but in the context of reassurance that a genuine and inclusive process of negotiations is on offer;
- for its part, HMG has agreed with the Irish Government that a sufficient address to the Mitchell proposals on decommissioning at the opening plenary in order to allow the launch of the three stranded negotiations requires:
 - a commitment by the participants to work constructively to implement all aspects of the Mitchell report; and
 - agreement on the machinery or format to enable further progress to be made on decommissioning alongside the three stranded negotiations.

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If we stick to this in talking to Hume, we cannot go far wrong. It means, however, that we are not seeking:

- acceptance of the Mitchell report as a pre-condition for entering the negotiations (not a requirement made of the other parties);
- resolution of the decommissioning issue before three stranded negotiations start (undeliverable and arguably contrary to the Mitchell report);
- the fixing, in advance of the start of three stranded negotiations, of a date for the start of decommissioning.

(as opposed to
signature on
interim
negot)

All of this is based firmly on the Mitchell report which, as you observed, clearly does envisage some decommissioning during negotiations, rather than just discussion of decommissioning.

Equally, the Mitchell report makes clear that this comes about in the context of a process of negotiations in which decommissioning and political issues are discussed in parallel.

Publication

Hume seems to have misinterpreted the paragraph on page 2 of the Prime Minister's letter as directed at him - when it was intended to be directed at Sinn Féin. If there is an opportunity, we should seek to reassure Hume that we do not doubt his own absolute rejection of violence.

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14. Aug. 1996 10:41
14/08/96 11:41

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Angela Dullaghan
PS/Michael Ancram
13 August 1996

cc: PS/Michael Ancram (SAL) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (SAL) - B

It would, however, be unwise to guarantee that in no circumstances would we publish this exchange of correspondence. It might be necessary to do so for defensive reasons - for example, if Sinn Féin published a one sided account.

Mr Ray - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (SAL) - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Boston - B
Mr Perry - B

Next steps

Hume is to come back to you, so we need do nothing until then.

If we want to be absolutely certain that Sinn Féin have an accurate account of our position, then we need either to write to them direct ourselves, or to have a meeting with officials. The Prime Minister's letter to Hume held out the prospect of such a meeting if Sinn Féin wanted one, and that may be the best way of avoiding any further muddled messages.

over in the light of
events on the ground:
not an unqualified

5) hr. PS/Secre A copy goes to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

DESCRIPTION OF THE SALES: OUTLINE HANDLING PLAN

The Minister has now read a copy of Mr Hill's submission to you of a report which provided an outline handling plan for when the sales volume is high. The Minister has noted this with agreement.

ROBERT CRAWFORD

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BB/SOPS/28763