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*File
(in Grand
Committee
papers)
M. refer re. debate
+ intervention on X or
N.I. Assembly
Jan 27/2.*

From: John Holmes
Date: 19 February 1997 *20.2*

cc: Philip Barton

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND: TRIMBLE

X Michael Ancram has told me that his conversation with Trimble this afternoon went well. On the Grand Committee, he was able to iron out a lot of misunderstandings. After some discussion, Trimble said that he would not insist on the Grand Committee having the right to amend Orders in Council, but would be satisfied if the Northern Ireland Grand Committee was given powers along the lines of the Scottish Grand Committee. Michael thinks this is doable and is exploring the details further. ✓

On the talks, Trimble explained that he had been very worried that the Government would pull the plug on the talks in the next few days, without warning. Michael said that this was far from the case. We were looking for a soft landing and doing our best to ensure one. He gave an undertaking that the plug would not be pulled without full consultation with the UUP, and agreed to talk to Trimble again on Monday. Trimble seemed happy with this. ✓

The conversation was good in atmosphere, and Michael thinks that Trimble is okay for the moment. ✓

On the Grand Committee, we obviously need to make sure we get the timing right. I assume that you will not want the UUP to have got all they want before

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- 2 -

the beginning of March, but will also want to keep encouraging them that things are moving in the right direction. The point is to produce a Motion to amend the Standing Orders before too long but ensure no Parliamentary time is found until well into March.

Content?

**John Holmes****CONFIDENTIAL**