

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to
the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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29 August 1997

Dear John,

FOLLOW-UP TO THE PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE UUP

Your letter of 28 August recording yesterday's meeting with the UUP identified a number of follow-up actions.

I sent you yesterday evening an outline speaking note for the Prime Minister's planned conversation with the Taoiseach, and Jonathan Stephens' note of earlier today incorporated further advice in the light of subsequent contact with the DFA. We can consider in the light of that conversation what changes might be made to the draft letter for the Prime Minister to send to Mr Trimble which was attached to my letter of 27 August (containing briefing for yesterday's meeting). The draft will in any event need to be updated to reflect the fact that Sinn Féin has now been invited to join the negotiations.

On the Chairmanship issue, we see advantage in pursuing Trimble's idea of a fudge which would leave De Chastelain notionally in the Chair of strand two with either of the other Chairmen able to act as "alternates" if he were otherwise occupied. That would probably achieve our objective of getting Mitchell into the Chair de facto, but without requiring an explicit

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vote to that effect which would be difficult for the UUP. No doubt you will let us know how the Taoiseach reacts to this suggestion.

In connection with the list of measures to build confidence in the pro-Union community I attach a draft letter which the Secretary of State proposes to send to Mr Trimble giving a generally positive response. (Part of the section on decommissioning may need adjustment, depending on what language the Prime Minister is able to agree with the Taoiseach.) We aim to put some of this material into the public domain early next week.

The Secretary of State is writing separately about the possibility of taking the proposed legislation on police reform by Bill, rather than Order in Council.

The Secretary of State has looked again at the possibility of releasing on medical grounds the two Loyalist prisoners mentioned by Mr Trimble, but has concluded that this would not be possible. The reasons are summarised in the attached note. We do of course share Mr Trimble's concern about the mood of the Loyalist community and Paul Murphy has sought early meetings with both the PUP and the UDP to see what might be done to reduce tensions. The Secretary of State has also written to the UDP and PUP underlining the Government's commitment to the principle of consent and giving an assurance that the enduring nature of the ceasefires will be taken into account by the Life Sentence Review Board in assessing recommendations for release. A copy of this is also attached.

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I am sending copies of this letter to John Grant (FCO), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

*Yours ever,
Ken.*

W K LINDSAY

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