

Ref: BO.2175

MR OAKDEN

cc Ms Polley

Prime Minister

JEH (not clear how the PM read it)

L614/x

L'U
JH (x/x)

L611/10

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE: NEXT STEPS

1. As you may know, the NIO do not intend to pronounce on this in advance of their planned brainstorming with Ministers at 1730 on 14 October, which is apparently the earliest they can manage for that purpose. My own first thoughts, without going into all the detail, are as follows.
2. Like you, I take it as read that, not least for political reasons, we cannot accept the new Hume/Adams text as it stands. But I look forward to seeing the NIO's more detailed analysis of exactly how objectionable the language is and of how far Hume's assertion that "all the amendments involve words that we have used before" can be borne out. I have in mind that if we do not publish the Hume text, or something very like it, Sinn Fein might seek a propaganda coup by publishing it themselves and asking whether it had really been too much to ask in exchange for the guarantee of a permanent ceasefire. To those not steeped in the linguistic mysteries of Northern Ireland business, the text would probably appear pretty innocent. We shall need to be well briefed against that contingency.
3. There are clear attractions in the idea of calling it a day, and deciding not to publish at all. The simplest, neatest approach, which could readily be combined with a propaganda hatchet job on Adams, the hypocrite. Sinn Fein could be blamed for scuppering the exercise both because of the Lisburn bomb and because they persisted in demanding textual changes which they must have known would be unacceptable to HMG and other parties in the talks. Hume,

though doubtless highly frustrated, might find non-publication, as a result of which he at least retained freedom of manoeuvre, less aggravating than a text which ignored some or all of his amendments. There would however be keen disappointment in Dublin and Washington, and Adams would be able to argue that "perfectly reasonable" Sinn Fein ideas had been rejected out of hand by HMG. ✓

4. As between the three options involving publication:

- in different political circumstances one could construct a case for swallowing some of the Hume/Adams amendments, the guideline in each case being whether or not to do so would involve changing the Government's existing position on the substance involved. Given however the sensitivity, a fortiori so soon after Lisburn, attaching to being seen to "negotiate" with Sinn Fein, and our likely inability in any case, even assuming good faith on their part, to move far enough towards their position to convince them that a deal could on that basis be done, there must be a strong case for eschewing these new amendments altogether. To take some but not the ones Sinn Fein regard as crucial would simply attract fresh opprobrium (from various quarters) without winning the trick;
- to publish the text sent to Hume on 27 September would arguably achieve nothing, while causing maximum irritation to Hume (there might on that scenario be an outside chance of the SDLP as a result pulling out of the talks) and leaving Sinn Fein with a good deal of scope for mischief-making. The Irish Government might still offer firm support, ✓

given the Taoiseach's mood post-Lisburn, but might well in practice sound pretty half-hearted;

- to publish the 27 September text with at least some of Teahon's amendments (? all but the first) would bring the Irish Government more firmly on board, and would enable HMG to claim the credit for at least that degree of flexibility. The US too could presumably be brought to support such a text. The result would still not be a ceasefire, but could be the best way of putting pressure on PIRA to refrain from or at least limit the scope of further violence. Possible downside: objections from Trimble (especially if he realised that some of the Teahon amendments overlap with ones proposed by Hume/Adams).

5. On balance my inclination would be to publish the 27 September text plus some of the Teahon amendments. As ever there is much to be said, to the extent that it can be done without losing the UUP, for standing as far as we can shoulder to shoulder with the Taoiseach, especially if we also have US support. To publish such a text would also help keep the Government on the front foot in the propaganda game, and by the same token keep Sinn Fein on the defensive.

This may be right



6. I see no need, for all Hume's importunate approaches, to rush our response on this. I therefore recommend waiting for a full discussion in NI.

Colin Budd

COLIN BUDD

11 October 1996

Jonathan's instinct is that we should get some text into the public domain, rather than have unpublished texts floating around that could later be made to look suspicious.