

CONFIDENTIAL



cc - JEH
EO
JH.

fel
😊

10 DOWNING STREET

LONDON SW1A 2AA

From the Private Secretary

30 October 1996

Dear Gen,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

John Hume rang me this afternoon to say that he had been in touch with Adams following the meeting with the Prime Minister. Adams had gone off to see the IRA and to try and draft some language. Hume said that he had passed on to Adams the formulation about permanence which the Prime Minister had suggested. Hume thought that Adams would not have too much difficulty with this (I wonder). However, Adams had also said that he was only doing this on the understanding that we would be using the text which we had most recently been given - broadly speaking, said Hume.

I said that the text we were working on was closely based on the latest texts exchanged but there would certainly have to be changes, as we had already warned him. Hume did not seem unduly phased by this, but said that this underlined the importance of getting our new text to him as soon as possible.

Hume went on to say yet again that he wanted to get on with the exercise before anything else happened. I said again that we also wanted to bring the current exercise to a conclusion, since the dangers of a leak were growing all the time. Hume added that he had been pleased with the meeting with the Prime Minister. I said that we had also been pleased.

Hume said he would be in touch again soon, but did not specify when.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

- 2 -

Comment

Adams' comment to Hume is a useful reminder that the fact that we will be changing in some important ways the text he/Hume sent us is likely to cause the deal to break down, even if we got everything else right.

From the Private Secretary

30 October 1996

I am copying this letter to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

Dear Hume,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

Paddy Teahan spoke to me this afternoon and subsequently faxed me the attached ideas on how to handle Sinn Féin after the new ceasefire. He said that these ideas had been floated in a meeting between the Taoiseach and Sir Patrick Mayhew this afternoon. The Irish side had been impressed by the clearly negative response.

Yours ever
John

JOHN HOLMES

After Teahan had described what the Irish had in mind in more detail (I had not seen the text at that time) we were not surprised by our response. The Irish were effectively saying that Sinn Féin could join the talks as soon as there was a new ceasefire. This was not credible and indefensible politically here.

Teahan said that what the Irish were suggesting was effectively a situation where Sinn Féin were neither fully in, nor out, and where we would maintain our commitment to the Mitchell principles against them. I said that we were in this but the fact remained that, if Sinn Féin came into the talks immediately after a ceasefire, this would not be credible and most others would walk out.

Teahan said that this would not necessarily be the case. Under the Irish proposal, there would be no plebiscite until the chairman had finished bilateral consultations with the other parties. This process could be spun out, and no-one would have to sit down with Sinn Féin until they had demonstrated good faith. In the end, we just agreed to differ.

Teahan made two other points:

- (1) the Irish were increasingly worried about where the talks would go once the current exchanges about decommissioning had come to a conclusion. This was quite irrespective of Sinn Féin's position;

CONFIDENTIAL
CONFIDENTIAL