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FROM: D J R HILL
CPL DIVISION
25 OCTOBER 1996

cc: PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell* - B
Mr Thomas* - B
Mr Steele* - B
Mr Watkins* - B
Mr Bell* - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Stephens* - B
Mr Lavery* - B
Mr Perry* - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Priestly - B
Mr Cornick - B
Mr Whysall (L&B)* - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Ms Mapstone* - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Clarke, Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott, W'ton via RID - B
Mr Oakden, No 10 - B
Ms Collins, Cab Office (via IPL) - B
(* with Annexes)

PS/Michael Ancram* (L&B) - B
PS/Secretary of State* (L&B) - B

TALKS: GAMEPLAN FOR THE WEEK BEGINNING 28 OCTOBER

Objectives

These might be to

- promote agreement on how the Business Committee should [in due course] begin to function;
- encourage the development of a consensus on how the debate on decommissioning should be taken forward;

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- as part of that debate, but preferably this week, circulate and publish the paper setting out HMG's approach to decommissioning (and the accompanying speaking note);
- finalise agreement with the Irish on the "conditions of entry" passage of the "Hume/Adams" text and prepare to publish it;
- work on the UUP with a view to securing a reasonably positive response from them when the text is published.

Business Committee/Handling the debate on decommissioning

2. In a surreal development the Unionists have achieved their objective of an early meeting of the Business Committee by proposing its abolition - an amendment of the Rules of Procedure which must therefore be the subject of prior discussion in the Business Committee. There is unlikely to be any serious pressure to abolish the Committee and the Unionists, especially the UUP and DUP, may use Monday morning's Business Committee meeting positively, to set out the case for further meetings to consider the handling of talks business, including the "address" to decommissioning. Subject to Ministers' views, Mr Thomas and I will continue to support the view that meetings of the Business Committee could be helpful but that they should only be convened as and when there is sufficient support for that among the delegations.

3. As to the handling of the address to decommissioning, whether settled in the Business Committee or in plenary discussion, Peter Robinson's suggestion of last Tuesday seemed sensible:

- complete initial presentations
- provide opportunities to examine the position of each participant

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- submit proposals in relation to decommissioning
- discuss those proposals
- reach conclusions on the way forward.

Timing/Sequencing

4. The main handling issues for the coming week will be the timing of HMG's initial contribution to the debate on decommissioning; and the relative timing of any progress towards agreement on and deployment of any "Hume/Adams" text on 'conditions of entry'. The latter may be discussed at the Secretary of State's meeting with the Taoiseach today but action otherwise rests between the two Prime Ministers' offices.
5. The likelihood is that we will need to bat through the coming week without having resolved the "conditions of entry" point and can concentrate on setting out our opening position on decommissioning; but if things move fast on that track there may be a case for wrapping the two exercises together.
6. The main timing considerations are as follows:
 - (a) Michael Ancram signalled earlier this week that HMG intended to make its initial presentation on decommissioning after others had spoken and that still seems desirable in principle. The UUP, SDLP, Alliance Party, Women's Coalition, Irish Government and UDP all indicated last Tuesday that they intended to set out and/or speak to their positions next week (and the PUP is unlikely to stay completely silent). Mr McCartney promised a UKUP paper to which he may wish to speak. The Irish seem resigned to speaking before us. Everything else being equal that would point to HMG making its

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initial statement and circulating its position paper on Tuesday or more likely Wednesday. [The current drafts of both documents are at Annexes A and B. These are of course for the moment deliberately silent on "conditions of entry" and are effectively intended to explain and justify the "suggested conclusions" published on 1 October. The Irish have just sent us some comments on the paper at Annex B which raises a number of questions, including their commitment to the compromise approach to decommissioning. Further advice will be provided on Monday.]

- (b) meanwhile there is likely to be continued public and political speculation about the possibility of an IRA ceasefire and the conditions which should apply to Sinn Fein's entry to the talks. It is even possible that there could be moves towards an early ceasefire and in those circumstances it would be desirable to ensure that a "Hume/Adams" text incorporating the new entry conditions was published before that happened. (At present Sinn Fein has - and could publish - the earlier text, which is silent on this point.) We will in any event be under pressure on this front from the Unionist parties during the address to decommissioning. If we can reach agreement with the Irish on a text there could well be a case for giving it to Mr Hume and then circulating it to the other talks participants (and publishing it) quite quickly thereafter. Much may depend on developments over the weekend;
- (c) it is possible that the Decommissioning Bill could be introduced towards the end of the week, although that could be delayed until the following week and would not, in any event, mean that the Bill itself was published. In general, however, there would be advantage in ensuring

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that HMG's position (paper and speaking note) on decommissioning is set out before the bill is introduced, so that the bill is seen in its full context;

- (d) the riposte to Mr McCartney [Annex C] contains some valuable material but need not be deployed at this stage. While it could be incorporated at the beginning or end of the Government's speaking note on decommissioning, it could be delivered as a free-standing contribution to the debate - perhaps at the stage when participants are invited to comment or probe others' presentations. Either way, as the Secretary of State was not present for much of Mr McCartney's speech, it may be more appropriate for Michael Ancram to deliver it.

7. If the preparation of the "Hume/Adams" text is not complete in time we should plan on deploying the paper and speaking note on decommissioning by Wednesday, and possibly the riposte to Mr McCartney if a convenient opportunity arises.

8. If it becomes realistic to work towards the circulation and publication of the Hume/Adams text and our paper on decommissioning at the same time, by Wednesday, the Secretary of State might use the speaking note at Annex B with a suitable addition by way of introduction to the "Hume/Adams" text. Michael Ancram might find an opportunity to deploy the riposte to Mr McCartney at a later date.

9. The media handling of the publication of our paper on decommissioning and of any "Hume/Adams" text will be important. Separate advice will be provided, including on the possibility of a speech to package the key messages of the Hume/Adams text for public consumption.

Handling the Unionists

10. It would as ever be generally desirable to keep in touch with the Unionist parties, especially the UUP. They will be looking to

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hear the Government's position on "conditions of entry" for Sinn Fein and will want to find out what contacts there have been with Sinn Fein/the IRA about a ceasefire. If we do make rapid progress towards publication of the "Hume/Adams" text it would be desirable to brief Mr Trimble in advance and take care to present the issues to the UUP in ways which maximise the chance of securing at least grudging acquiescence in something which falls well short of the position reflected in their paper of 30 September and other public and private statements. We can expect nothing but trenchant criticism from the DUP and UKUP, but it would be desirable to try to secure a more positive attitude from the Loyalist parties: their support could be crucial in maintaining a "sufficient consensus".

11. If it becomes necessary, Ministers might draw on the checklist of arguments at Annex D in seeking to persuade the Unionist parties to respond reasonably constructively to a "Hume/Adams" text.

Timetable for 28 October

12. The Business Committee will begin at 10.30 am but I imagine there will be an opportunity for Mr Thomas and ^{me} to debrief to Ministers before the plenary at noon; and that might be the moment (perhaps around 11.30) to hold the briefing meeting. In practice HMG is unlikely to be called upon to contribute during Monday.

13. We understand that there will be no Irish Ministers at Castle Buildings on Monday but there should be no need to engage with them at political level anyway: the two Governments have a shared view on how to approach the decommissioning debate. It may become necessary, perhaps later in the week, to tie down any emerging understanding on the "Hume/Adams" text and how it should be handled.

14. We can also expect a request for an early meeting (possibly even before the plenary) with the UUP. It might be sensible to have a meeting at that stage and settle some of their concerns while

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undertaking to meet them later in the week to discuss "conditions of entry". A checklist of points which might be raised will be circulated separately.

(signed)

D J R HILL
CPL DIVISION
OAB 210 6591

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