

cc: JP  
PA  
AC

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



by fax

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John Holmes Esq  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
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24 October 1997

Dear John,

When Paul Murphy met the UUP earlier this week, they asked about a reference, in the attached paper tabled on constitutional issues, to the British Government standing by "all the commitments and proposals" set out in the constitutional section of the Framework document.

The UUP asked what commitments these were, and how there could be any commitments in the Framework document if the document as a whole was merely a proposal for discussion.

The constitutional section of the Framework document is clearly more than just proposals. It reflects the deep commitment of both Governments to the principle of consent and includes commitments by both Governments, in the context of a balanced overall accommodation, to bring forward amendments to their respective constitutional legislation which would enshrine this fully.

The commitment to change to Articles 2 and 3 by the Irish Government is a key one and one which the Irish Government were only prepared to make in the context of both a balanced overall accommodation and specific balancing commitments by the British Government, as set out particularly in paragraph 20. Indeed, that paragraph sets out not only commitments for the future but commitments as to the Government's present approach to Northern Ireland. In this, as in every area, if the participants manage to reach agreement on a different





basis, then obviously we would look at that very seriously. But since any agreement would need to include the Irish Government, the prospect of a fundamentally different approach is most unlikely. And, in practice, the UUP shares our objective of seeing the principle of consent fully enshrined in Irish constitutional legislation.

The attached draft reply attempts to set out the position, while seeking to avoid giving any grounds for the UUP to claim we have a predetermined outcome and have closed our eyes to any other possibilities. We thought it wise to clear the text with you in case any of the Prime Minister's discussions with the UUP had touched on the tissue.

The Minister would like to send a reply to the UUP by Monday lunch time, when he will be seeing them again in the context of the negotiations.

*Yours sincerely,*  
*Richard Lemon*

**RICHARD LEMON**  
PS/Mr Murphy MP