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FROM: D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
29 OCTOBER 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Priestly - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Stephens - B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (L&B) - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B

(Handwritten signature/initials over the list)

File Note

BUSINESS COMMITTEE MEETING, 28 OCTOBER 1996, 10.30 - SUMMARY RECORD

General de Chastelain reminded delegates that the sole item on the agenda was the DUP motion to abolish the Business Committee.

2. The Unionists acknowledged that they had no desire to abolish the Business Committee and the DUP said they would be withdrawing the relevant motion, but they took the opportunity to set out in reasonably moderate, positive and reassuring terms the case for having regular meetings of the Business Committee to help schedule business and to assist in the management of the talks process, including the address to decommissioning.

3. The SDLP (Sean Farren) was relatively conciliatory in reply. He argued that the prime role of the Business Committee was to cope with the complexities of the three stranded talks and that it was arguably unnecessary when the plenary was dealing with a single issue agenda, but conceded that it might be appropriate to reconsider the situation once every delegation had made an initial

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presentation. (This position was picked up and echoed by a number of other delegations). At the end he made a constructive proposal that the Chairman of the plenary, due to meet at noon, should invite delegations to say whether and when they would be ready to give an initial presentation of their views on decommissioning. This was warmly seconded by Peter Robinson who congratulated Sean Farren on demonstrating the utility of the Business Committee.

4. Other points of significance included:

- Sean O'hUiginn stirred up the Unionists by suggesting that suspicions aroused by the Unionists support for the Business Committee (eg that it was merely intended to open a second forum for more time wasting and gaming) would only be allayed once the plenary began to get down to business in a serious way;
- the Unionists argued, in response to a point by Sean Farren, that the talks were already addressing important substantive issues;
- General de Chastelain was reasonably firm as Chairman, tackling a couple of canards that could have caused trouble and focussing the debate on the key issues, but could perhaps have summed up more decisively;
- Peter Robinson questioned whether a precedent was being set that the Business Committee (and other formats) could only meet when there was a sufficient consensus among members, in contrast to Rule 14 which made clear that this was a matter to be determined by the Chairman. General de Chastelain dealt with this by arguing the issue of when the Business Committee should commence its substantive role was a unique circumstance.

(signed)

D J R HILL
POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT TEAM
CB x 23317

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