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FROM: ROBERT TRAVIS  
CONSTITUTIONAL & POLITICAL DIVISION  
3 DECEMBER 1997

cc as attached

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS SUMMARY 3 DECEMBER 1997

Summary

Another positive and productive day with progress being made in the sub-plenary. In addition there were meetings with Reg Empey, the UDP, the Irish, the Chairmen and the SDLP.

The sub-group convened with parties represented by leaders and deputies, with the exception of the UUP (Mr Empey and Mr Maginnis). The meeting was good humoured and constructive. The Senator tabled a list of key issues which the parties commented on in turn. Detailed comments are required from participants for next Monday. Initial comments were supportive and participants felt that agreement on the document was possible.

There was a difference in opinion on whether an agreed paper should accommodate everyone's position (Hume) or begin to face the need for real agreements to be reached on specific points (Hugh Smyth, Ken Maginnis). The governments spoke last and both called for the parties to move beyond the key issues and to consider what might constitute an outline agreement.

Mr Murphy had a positive private meeting with Reg Empey to discuss how best to move the debate on to issues of substance.

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The UDP had requested a meeting in order to register their annoyance and concern that they had not had prior notification of the announcement last night about the extension of Christmas leave for prisoners - from 7 to 10 days. Mr Murphy undertook to reflect with the Secretary of State about consultation prior to announcement on issues which may have implications for Talks participants.

The meeting with the Chairmen and Irish briefly reviewed progress today, but largely focused on how to handle business in the two weeks prior to the Christmas break. Senator Mitchell was generally optimistic, and it was felt that there were few obstacles preventing agreement on the document discussed at the sub-group from being reached. It was agreed that it would be useful prior to Monday's meeting of the sub-group to hold preparatory bilaterals with participants.

The Irish are due to prepare a draft of an outline agreement paper that might emerge from the sub-group to reach us tomorrow, for discussion among officials on Friday. It might then be fed into a discussion Mr Murphy hopes to arrange with Mr Trimble prior to the meeting on Monday. It was thought that Mr Hume's visit to the States next week may allow Mr Mallon to be more helpful in the meeting.

(Signed)

ROBERT TRAVIS

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