

C O N F I D E N T I A L

4839

POLITICAL AFFAIR
DIVISION

- 8 NOV 1996

N.I.O. RESEARCH

FROM: PS/PUS
7 NOVEMBER 1996

cc: PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Bell
Mr Stephens
Mr Hill
Mr Maccabe
Mr Lamont, RID
HMA Dublin

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MR THOMAS - B

TALKS CHAIRMAN - SUCCESSION TO SENATOR MITCHELL

There have been a number of inconclusive exchanges in recent months about the possible need to find a successor to George Mitchell if what is now the second Clinton administration needs him.

2. I think we need to pull together our own thoughts pretty quickly, so as to be able to concert action with the Irish, on the basis of an agreed British position.

3. One prompting for this minute is David McKittrick's piece in today's Independent which describes George Mitchell (not incorrectly, technically, but falsely by implication) as President Clinton's "designated US economic envoy", and talking of "another substantial figure will be despatched to Belfast to carry on his work". Clearly if a successor is needed at all (and I bet one would be) it must continue to be at the invitation of two governments rather than at the nomination of the United States Government. We shall have to watch the possible continuing sensitivities of Unionists to "peace envoys", and still more the unacceptable notion that the talks process has been internationalised to the point that the US Government has a locus of its own in the Chairmen's group.

4. In practice, I suppose, we would nonetheless look for an American, and act in consultation with though not at the nomination of the US administration, as well as finding agreement with the Irish Government on a candidate and carrying at least the acquiescence of the parties (with all the potential for a protracted re-run of the initial acceptance process unless we think that the procedural rules are strong enough to prevent that).

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5. I do not have any particular names in mind at this point, nor do I suggest that we should turn to pre-Mitchell candidates such as Malcolm Fraser. On the other hand, the American elections may have thrown up some possible new candidates by way of defeat or early retirement from politics, which RID and our Washington Embassy could advise on.

Signed

JOHN CHILCOT

7 DECEMBER 1996

PS/Sir John Maclear (DCL) - 3
 PS/Michael Ingram (DCL) - 3
 PS/Malcolm Ross (DCL) - 3
 PS/Baroness Denton (DCL) - 3
 PS/POB (DCL) - 3
 PS/Sir David Pall - 3
 Mr Thomas - 3
 Mr Steele - 3
 Mr Leach - 3
 Mr Bell - 3
 Mr Watkins - 3
 Mr Stephens - 3
 Mr Wood (DCL) - 3
 Mr Beeton - 3
 Mr Hill (DCL) - 3
 Mr Lavery - 3
 Mr Macdonald - 3
 Mr Perry - 3
 Ms Sharkey - 3
 Ms Napstone - 3
 Mr Waywell (DCL) - 3
 Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - 3
 Mr Dickinson, TAO - 3
 Mr Legant, RID PCO - 3
 HMA Dublin - 3
 Mr Westmacott (via RID) - 3
 Mr Campbell-Sannerman - 3
 Mrs McNally (DCL) - 3
 Mr Holmes, SO 10

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALES SUMMARY: 4 NOVEMBER 1996

Meeting Session

1. The meeting plenary, lasting just over two hours, continued the round of questioning to the two Governments adjourned from last evening.

2. Following a short (15 minute) adjournment to await the arrival of British and Irish Government Ministers, this session was opened by Mr Wolf for the UK. His questions were directed chiefly at the

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