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PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas L+B
Mr Steele
Mr Ray
Mr Bell
Mr Leach
Mr Watkins
Mr Stephens
Mr Hill
Mr Perry
Mr Maccabe
Mr Beeton
Mr Lavery
Ms Mapstone
Mr Campbell-Barnemore.

civ(A)

From : John Holmes

To: Ken Lindsay

Subject: Hume/Adams Initiative

Date: 4/11/96

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10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

4 November 1996

From the Private Secretary

Dear Ken,

HUME/ADAMS INITIATIVE

John Hume duly telephoned me late this afternoon. He had had his planned meeting with Adams. Adams had been very upset by the leak over the weekend, which had made things more difficult. However he was going to talk to the IRA about the main question we had raised, that of "permanence".

Hume said that Adams' position was that, in the event of the Prime Minister making a statement as proposed in the latest text given to us, the IRA would declare a ceasefire and make an appropriate statement in response. Adams had talked Hume through the statement but had wanted to avoid having anything in writing, for fear of leaks. The statement would begin with references to the previous cessation of 1994, and the fact that other people had not treated this as seriously as the IRA. There would be other passages too. But the key passage would say that they were announcing an unequivocal restoration of the cessation, and that the statement by the Prime Minister, in their opinion, provided the basis for a total ending of the conflict and lasting peace. (Hume repeated this three times, at my request, using slightly different wording on each occasion, but the gist was the same in each case.)

Hume said that if Sinn Fein got the message from us that we would make the statement on a certain day, they would let us know when they would be making their statement. But Hume stressed that all this was on the assumption that the statement the Prime Minister would make was the text we had been given. He thought it would take Adams a couple of days or so to talk to the IRA about this, but if there was to be a message meanwhile saying that we were ready to make the statement, things could move very fast.

I thanked Hume for this but said that, as Hume was aware, we were bound to seek changes in the text that had been given to us to make it consistent with our policy. Hume said that he was aware of that, and was very worried about it. If we were going to make changes, we should tell him as soon as possible what they were. He hoped they would be as few as possible. He was worried about a situation where Adams was acting on the basis of the text as it

stood. If there were then subsequent changes, this might be dangerous for the whole operation. That was why he needed to know as soon as possible what the changes were.

Hume added that he had cleared one change to the text with Adams already. He had suggested that the statement referred to "developing" policing arrangements rather than "creating" them. I said that this was one of the changes we would in any case have been looking for. Hume repeated that the key areas of the text were the references to the inclusive nature of the negotiations, the timeframe and confidence-building measures. On the timeframe, he believed that references to the existing one year life of the talks/forum would go a long way to doing the trick.

I confirmed again that we would be looking for changes to the text we had been given. I said that we would need to reflect on what Hume had said. I would try to come back to him reasonably soon. Hume underlined the need to move quickly. He thought the process could be brought to a conclusion by the end of the week, with luck. He continued to believe that there was a unique opportunity here.

Hume also referred in passing to his suspicion, from statements he had seen, that Trimble had been briefed about the initiative. I said that we had briefed Trimble in general terms, in order to avoid extreme reactions if and when the initiative leaked, but Trimble had not seen any texts. Hume did not raise particular objections to this.

Comment

We now need to consider very quickly how to react to Hume. The form of words from Adams does not seem to offer much at first sight, but the experts will want to look at it carefully. In any case, we need to decide whether to go back to Hume with our text quickly. There is otherwise a danger that we will be accused of bad faith. However, we cannot easily do this without touching base with the Irish again, given the strength of views expressed by the Taoiseach about further consultation, via Teahon. I would be grateful for advice on all this as soon as you can provide it.

Yours ever

John

JOHN HOLMES

Ken Lindsay Esq
Northern Ireland Office