

FROM: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

CONFIDENTIAL



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Dear John

LORD CRANBORNE AND ANDREW MACKAY

Dr Mowlam met Lord Cranborne and Andrew MacKay last night in the House of Commons for a short time and discussed Northern Ireland issues. They said that there were real problems within the Unionist community and, in their view, unless the UUP got more support they would walk from the process. David Trimble was in deep trouble and faced a serious challenge to his leadership on 24 March. They also thought that if the Prime Minister saw Sinn Fein before 9 March, then it would be very difficult for the Unionists to stay in the Talks. They did not raise any objections to a 7 May deadline for a referendum and apparently said that there was to be a shadow Cabinet meeting today at which Northern Ireland would be on the agenda, in particular on the question of campaigning in Northern Ireland for both the referendum and the subsequent election.

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINDSAY

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Lord Cranborne and A Mackay/WKLrm