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31(a) 19 DEC 96

From: John McKervill
Political Affairs Division
18 December 1996

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/Malcolm Moss (DHSS, DOE&L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Brooker - B
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Priestly -- B
Ms Bharucha - B
Ms Mapstone - B
~~Mr Mervyn~~ (B&L) - B
Ms Collins, Cab Off (via IPL) - B
Mr Dickinson, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID FCO - B
HMA Dublin
Mr Jones, HO (via IPL) - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10 (via IPL) - B

File
JH 19/12

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

TALKS: 18 DECEMBER 1996: SUMMARY

Talks adjourned for Christmas until 13 January 1997 when meetings among participants will recommence. Full plenary to convene to 27 January 1997.

Detail

At 1030 the Chairmen met with the two Governments to discuss the day's proceedings. At the meeting they produced a draft speaking note and a draft press release, not dissimilar to those submitted to

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them by the British delegation the previous day! They proposed, with both Governments' agreement, to adjourn the talks until 13 January when bilaterals would take place followed by resumption of full plenary on 27 January.

At the plenary meeting, which began at 1110 all parties, with the predictable exception of the DUP and UKUP, agreed to the proposals, but not without registering their disappointment at the lack of progress to date. Both the DUP, in the form of an on form Dr Paisley, and the UKUP led by Mr McCartney both urged, unsuccessfully, for determination now of the decommissioning issue, and, in the process, describing the process as a 'charade'.

The meeting concluded at 1200 with agreement that bilateral talks would resume on 13 January, with full plenary adjourned until noon on 27 January. As a concession to Dr Paisley, delegates agreed that, on their return on 13 January, the Chairmen would consider calling an informal meeting of all delegations to hear of their 'reflections' during the Christmas break.

Comment

Despite most delegations reflecting their frustration and regret at the lack of progress since September, this ended up as a good-humoured meeting, with all the boys and girls resolved to return for the Spring term. The all-party Christmas lunch did nothing to dampen the spirit of relative goodwill to all men and women.

Signed

J MCKERVILL
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