

FROM: SECRETARY OF STATE
16 December 1996

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
Mr Holmes, No 10

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

CONVERSATION WITH DAVID TRIMBLE MP

CLOSED UNDER THE

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

ACT 2000

I spoke on Sunday evening, 15 December, with David Trimble.

2. In response to my inquiry as to how he had got on over the weekend he denied doing anything but later allowed that he 'had met with a few colleagues'.

3. I said I was glad some convergence had usefully developed between UUP, SDLP and Alliance. Mr Trimble said he was not very happy with what he had heard.

Mr Trimble was not fully informed, and would have to catch himself on.

4. I said it was important that we try to get decommissioning agreed and disposed of before the Christmas break. Then we could get into 3 strands after Christmas. Mr Trimble didn't know about that. He had hoped that HMG was developing its policy sensibly: where did we stand? I said that we could conform to the parties movement evidenced in the tripartite paper. Further expressions of doubt and suspicion followed. The trouble was that NIO officials kept telling his colleagues that HMG had the end of January in mind for the entry of Sinn Fein. I said the Government had resolutely

refused to name a date. Mr Trimble said he knew what the Prime Minister's policy was.

5. I said he and his party seemed to have got on quite well in Washington. Mr Trimble said they were disappointed not to have met the new team: but they had had no trouble on the Hill, or elsewhere. I said our impression was that the Administration were markedly less green in their objectives and understanding and that it was important that this be maintained. Mr Trimble said that they would do their best to help. On this implausible note the conversation concluded, with a mutual expectation of a meeting on Monday, after he had caught himself on.

6. It will be apparent that there was none of the desire to get quickly into the Strands that had earlier been professed. I forebore to refer to the dragging of feet; and who might be dragging them. But they will find it difficult to resile from a paper they have sent to the Chairmen.

(SIGNED)

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