



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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SECRET

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DEVOLUTION

SUMMARY

- A new phase in the DUP/OUP anti-Agreement campaign has gotten underway with a focus on political lobbying at Westminster. It is now clearly accepted that the boycott was a failure.
- The Task Force report is expected in three weeks and is rumoured to contain some form of power-sharing, though in a somewhat hidden form.
- Archbishop Eames believes that talks will take place under his auspices between the four Northern Ireland party leaders before the end of the summer. Eames himself will pursue his own idea of a second agreement to supercede the present one.
- John Stanley's move to Northern Ireland may be connected with the prospect of talks.
- There are three Irish priorities; devolution must be set the context of the special relationship between Ireland and Britain, power-sharing must be at executive level and acceptable to the SDLP, and cross-border matters must be accomdated in North-South terms.

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SECRET

DEVOLUTION

- The return of OUP and DUP MPs to Westminster signals the renewal of political activity in the House of Commons under the slogan "consultation not confrontation". The objective of OUP/DUP political pre-initiative manoeuvring is to present unionists as more politically generous than the SDLP.
- The Task Force report is expected within three weeks. It has been privately suggested by Archbishop Eames to a Departmental contact that it will contain some form of power-sharing but that it will be "wrapped up" - i.e., hidden. Eames hinted that some form of consultative assembly was envisaged.
- Eames intends proceeding with his own ideas, set out in his presidential address to the General Synod, sometime in mid-August. He had proposed that the present Anglo-Irish Agreement be superceded chronologically and constitutionally by a second agreement "involving to a greater extent all the constitutional parties concerned in Northern Ireland". The new agreement ought to reassure both nationalists and unionists, he held. It could have a chance of success if unionists shared a new willingness to appreciate nationalists and if nationalists shared "a new willingness to make the structures of the community work for all the people of the province".
- Archbishop Eames believes that there is a distinct possibility of talks between Hume, Molyneaux, Paisley and Cushnahan under his auspices before the end of the summer.

- It could be suggested that the appointment of John Stanley as Northern Ireland Minister may be a prescient move given the possibility of talks. As Prime Minister Thatcher's private parliamentary secretary for three years (1976-9) and known for his energy, secrecy and capability, he has the proper credentials for link man between the North and London.

- From the Irish Government's point of view, any move towards devolution would have to meet three basic criteria; the Anglo-Irish Agreement should remain in place and Article 4(b) and (c) should be respected, to ensure that devolution occurs within the special relationship between Ireland and Britain. Secondly, "power-sharing" should be real, i.e. at executive level and acceptable to the SDLP. Thirdly, as stated in Article 10(c), should responsibility for economic, social or cultural areas be devolved, then "machinery will need to be established by the responsible authorities in the North and South for practical cooperation in respect of cross-border aspects of these issues".

McK.

Anglo-Irish Section

16 June 1987

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