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Points from discussion with Bill Jeffrey, NIO

24 June 1998

Mowlam's Press Conference

1. The Secretary of State will hold a press conference on Saturday afternoon with the objective of (a) welcoming the election results, and (b) focussing attention on the need to move the implementation of the Agreement forward on all fronts. In this regard, the Secretary of State intended referring to the importance of the equality and North/South dimensions of the Agreement. In welcoming this, I also emphasised, at considerable length, the crucial importance of the Shadow Executive being established as quickly as possible. At the least, we needed to see a firm timetable agreed for the early establishment of this body. It would be very helpful if the Secretary of State could emphasise this in her press conference statement.
2. In response to my questions, Jeffrey said that the British had no understanding with, or private assurance from, Trimble on the timing of the establishment of the Shadow Executive.
3. Other issues to be raised in the press conference would include references to the two Governments signing decommissioning orders next Monday, to the British Government's support for victims, and to planned initiatives on the economic front.

Criminal Justice Review

4. Also on Saturday, the names of the Criminal Justice Review Body will be announced. I said that we were happy that one of our nominees (Eugene Grant) had been accepted, and that also one of the names we had put forward for a different Commission, the Prisoners Review Body, (John Jackson) had been selected. In welcoming the Body, and wishing it every success in its important work, we would avoid any reference to individual members.
5. We both agreed that the past difficulties between the two Governments in this general area (as reflected in the appointment of the Police Commission) seemed now to have been satisfactorily resolved.

DUP in Executive ?

6. Jeffrey said, in reply to my question, that he did not expect the DUP to take their seats in the Executive. However, he was worried about the Anti-Agreement candidates doing better than generally expected in the election. In this regard, a particular problem could arise over the requirement that the First and Deputy First Minister required a majority of both unionists and nationalists in the Assembly if they were to win election (see page 8, paragraph 15, of the Agreement). I said I doubted if anti-Agreement candidates would win 50% of the Unionist seats.

Government Departments

7. We discussed at length the need to move forward with the implementation of all aspects of the Agreement, including the designation of up to ten Government Departments in Northern Ireland, and the negotiation of the

North-South Implementation Bodies. We both shared the view that the structuring of new Departments in the North should not be an unduly long process. Apart from the possible establishment of a new Department of Equality, the process would mainly involve splitting up existing Departments (e.g. the Department of Economic Development) into two or more parts. What was crucial to moving the process forward was the designation of portfolios; the detailed range of functions could, if required, be adjusted and refined over time.

8. As regards the Implementation Bodies, the initial designation was again the key. The Bodies could easily begin work with a certain number of essential staff, and then be built on quickly over a period. If the political will was there on both sides, we could overcome any bureaucratic foot-dragging or delaying tactics in advancing these aspects of the Agreement.

Drumcree

9. On Drumcree, Jeffrey expected the Parades Commission to issue an adjudication on Monday against the march taking place on the Garvaghy Road. It would be the British intention to uphold this. Jeffrey regretted that he could not see any willingness to move on either side. I made the point that Adams and Sinn Féin seemed to carry less weight with the Garvaghy Road residents, especially MacCionnaith, than they did with such groups elsewhere in Northern Ireland.

Prisoners Review Group

10. The British did not intend naming the members of this group for some time, given in particular that it would be premature to do so given that the

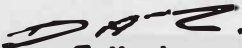
necessary legislation had not yet been taken in the Lords. However, they felt that we (and the nationalist parties) would welcome the fact that they were likely to appoint the South African, Brian Currin, as Joint Chairman. (Currin is known to, and thought positively of, by Sinn Féin). Jeffrey would discuss other names with us in due course, and he had of course our list of nominees.

Prisoner Releases

11. I briefed Jeffrey on our envisaged legislation on prisoner releases here. In this regard, he expressed a significant degree of concern about any unilateral early releases by us. He felt, in principle, that there should be some coherence between releases in both jurisdictions. It became clear also that a particular concern in London was the possible early release of transferees from Britain, and the impact of any such move, in isolation, on British public opinion. Jeffrey added that the Home Secretary, Jack Straw, would be making contact with the Minister for Justice on this. In response, I said that, given our legislation would not be introduced in the Dáil until next week, it was unlikely that there would be any releases here before Drumcree.

Normalisation of Security

12. The British strategy paper on this would not be published immediately, and would probably be held over until after Drumcree. I said this seemed to make sense. We would be letting the British have our detailed observations on their initial draft paper over the weekend. He knew how much weight we added to the paper getting the strategy right, and, in particular, signalling to nationalists that change would be visible on the ground at an early date.


Dermot Gallagher
Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

26 June 1998