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Reference Code:	2017/10/82
Creation Dates:	17 July 1987
Extent and medium:	6 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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SECRET

Meeting with Archbishop Eames, 17 July 1987

I called on Archbishop Robin Eames, the Church of Ireland Primate and Archbishop of Armagh, at his residence in Armagh on 17 July.

The Archbishop passed the following information to me in the strictest confidence.

Talks about talks

Jim Molyneaux rang Eames from London a few minutes after the Unionists' meeting with NIO officials concluded last Tuesday night and gave him the following account of it.

The meeting went well and the atmosphere was good. It ended after 25 minutes simply because Paisley had to go to the Commons to attend the Sunday drinking debate.

Bloomfield informed the Unionist leaders at the outset that the Conference would be meeting in London two days later. Molyneaux and Paisley (as the former indicated to Eames on the phone) had no great difficulty with this. Eames' view is that "people are getting tired of a campaign going nowhere" and that the talks about talks were more important to the Unionist leaders than any individual meeting of the Conference. Bloomfield then asked the Unionists what their bottom line would be in any negotiations with the British Government. Molyneaux replied by referring to the speech delivered by Archbishop Eames at the recent Church of Ireland Synod, in the course of which the Archbishop posited "a second Agreement - which would constitutionally and chronologically supercede the first but which could deal in a realistic manner with the feelings of both communities". Molyneaux said that Unionists would like to see a new type of Agreement which would preserve the safeguards for nationalists contained in the present

Agreement but would provide Unionists with a much greater input than heretofore. Borrowing a phrase which Eames has used privately (including to the undersigned - my report of a conversation of 3 June refers), he said that he would envisage something which would "embellish" the present Agreement. (Eames has been telling Molyneaux for some time past that Unionists should present their case in more positive terms, i.e., as an effort not to destroy the existing Agreement but rather to improve or "embellish" it with modifications which take account of Unionist concerns. Although he used it in his speech, Eames has now moved away from the phrase "a second Agreement" which, he made clear, smacks too much of "tearing up one text and replacing it with an entirely new one").

Molyneaux pressed Bloomfield for a British reaction to Eames' proposal. He also asked him what he thought the Irish Government's view of the proposal would be. Bloomfield replied by saying that he had no idea. Persisting with this, Molyneaux said to Bloomfield some minutes later: "If you have no idea, I have my own way of finding out". This, Eames explained, was a reference to the contacts which Molyneaux knows the Archbishop has with Dublin.

Bloomfield said he would reflect on what Molyneaux had said and indicated that he would use "the usual channels" to establish the views of the Irish Government on the Eames proposal. He would also seek the views of the Secretary of State.

It was agreed that the two sides would meet again in the autumn. Privately, however, Molyneaux and Bloomfield have agreed to keep in touch over the coming weeks (Paisley will be out of the country until early August). It was understood that Bloomfield would come back to Molyneaux with some indication of how London and Dublin stand on the Eames proposal.

Molyneaux told Eames that, prior to Tuesday's meeting, he and Paisley had objected to the inclusion of John McConnell (NIO) on the British side. They did not want him there because "he talks too much". McConnell was replaced, therefore, by Ian Burns.

Eames has arranged a meeting with Bloomfield (with whom he is on close terms) for late this week. We agreed that I would contact him again shortly thereafter.

Eames was pleased that, prior to Tuesday's meeting, Molyneaux had publicly used the phrase "totality of relationships" ^{*} in accepting that there would have to be a role for the Irish Government in any new agreement. He claimed credit for having suggested it to the OUP leader for use on an earlier occasion (in the document handed by the Unionist leaders to Mrs. Thatcher in August 1985). Molyneaux had never really understood the phrase, however, and had had to ask Eames for an explanation of it last week. (Eames' comment on this to me was: "That's the calibre of the man I'm dealing with").

Eames' own initiative

Recalling the invitation to informal talks under his auspices which he had sent to the four party leaders some weeks ago, I asked the Archbishop how matters stood at present in relation to this proposal. He said that at the time he received acceptances from three of the four leaders. Hume and Cushnahan rang him to accept and Molyneaux did so in person. (Eames sees Molyneaux on average once a week). None of them mentioned any preconditions for the talks. Molyneaux told him, furthermore, that he would be able to "deliver" Paisley.

Eames believes that the willingness on the part of all four to meet for talks is still there. He makes little secret, furthermore, of his own desire to be the man who brings them all together. However, in view of the changed political circumstances, he now envisages a meeting in mid-August at

* See attached cuttings

which there would be no political agenda as such. Rather, the four would discuss some vague generalised topic such as ways in which sectarian strife might be reduced. Eames has in mind inviting them to lunch, followed by an afternoon's discussion, in a hotel in London. A brief public statement would be issued afterwards.

He believes that Hume and Cushnahan will accept this invitation. He would like Paisley to do so as well but is prepared to go ahead without the DUP leader if necessary. What he is most worried about (and he did not disguise this in our conversation) is the possibility that Molyneaux may opt out. So far, there is nothing to suggest that he will do so. Molyneaux is fully aware of what Eames has in mind for mid-August and, indeed, told him the other day that he knows a suitable hotel in London and would like to pay half of the costs. Eames replied, jokingly, that he would have "none of your Unionist money" and that the Church of Ireland would foot the bill. Despite this sign that Molyneaux is serious about the London meeting, Eames fears that the OUP leader may pull out under pressure from Paisley and that his initiative will come to naught. He has known Molyneaux for long enough to know that "he is capable of a U-turn". Paisley could claim that talks with the SDLP are unwise at the present juncture and Molyneaux would decide not to break with Paisley for the sake of Eames' initiative. (Eames fears, in fact, any rupture between Molyneaux and Paisley: he believes that this would precipitate a palace coup within the OUP which would remove his friend and ally definitively from the political arena). However, Eames sees one advantage in the London meeting for Molyneaux and Paisley: even if they were to decide (for whatever reason) to break off their contacts with the NIO, their participation in the London talks would enable them to claim that they still remain open to practical, constructive politics.

Eames raised the possibility of a call on the Taoiseach in the near future in order to brief the latter on the meeting he is planning for London. He asked me to convey a response as soon

as possible. I said that I would relay the request and would be in touch in due course.

Tanaiste's remarks

On the assumption that his London meeting will in fact materialise, Eames envisages three fora for contacts over the coming months:

- continuing contacts between the two Governments in the Anglo-Irish Conference;
- continuing contacts between Unionists leaders and NIO civil servants;
- the meeting between the four party leaders under his own auspices.

He sees a parallelism between these and was very pleased with radio remarks made by the Tanaiste who, following this week's meeting of the Conference, welcomed the 'talks about talks' while making it clear that they were separate and apart from the Anglo-Irish Conference.

Task Force Report

Eames praised this document at some length and, not surprisingly, went on to claim some credit for it. He said that Frank Millar had visited him "backwards and forwards" while the report was being written and that, from a number of OUP figures, he understood that his own Synod speech had been the crucial stimulus for the report. He also praised the Presbyterian Moderator's remarks around the same time - which, moreover, had been instigated by himself.

Eames is a firm believer in devolution ("power-sharing if necessary"). He sees this as the whole thrust of the report. (The threat of negotiated independence was inserted "just for

the wild men" and is not a serious option). In view of Molyneaux's opposition to devolution and personal dislike of Frank Millar, Eames feared that the report might drive a wedge between himself and the OUP leader and that their personal relations might suffer. As it turned out, however, "Molyneaux did not hold the report against me". Eames values greatly his friendship with Molyneaux. He has little time for any of Molyneaux's possible successors - he dismisses McCusker as too emotional and Smyth as "unimpressive". He would like to see Millar as the next OUP leader but accepts that this is most unlikely.

Eames felt that his particular contribution had been to hint to Unionists that, instead of simply trying to have the Agreement torn up (which was not realistic), they should do a deal with the SDLP on devolution and have this reflected in a new, or modified, Agreement. He hinted strongly that, in exchange for agreed devolution terms which would be incorporated in the modified Agreement, the Irish Government should not insist on Maryfield as the location for the Secretariat but should accept Dublin or London instead. I countered with the standard arguments in favour of Maryfield (already put to him on earlier occasions).

Eames made it clear that he would like the Unionists to go "all the way" in their dialogue with the British Government and, hopefully, the SDLP. He fears, however, that Molyneaux may "slip off" at some stage, as he is fundamentally unhappy with devolution. Eames will do all he can to prevent this.

David Donoghue
David Donoghue
20 July 1987.

cc: *Tanaka*
Secretary
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[Signature]
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