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*Dr Martin Mansergh,
Special Advisor to An Taoiseach,
Government Buildings,
DUBLIN 2.*

58, 25A

11 May, 1998



Dear Dr Mansergh,

Further to our last note to you we attach a copy of a report of our private meeting with some members of the UUP in Hillsborough on last Saturday afternoon.

David Thompson arranged the meeting. In attendance were Pat Hynes and myself Dermot Nesbit and Graham Montgomery accompanied David.

It is not possible to overstate the warmth, honesty and openness of the three UUP people. The meeting was conducted in a very friendly and businesslike manner. They recognised that, in the context of the referendum, statements from the Irish Government are heard and interpreted by all sides, whereas they are only addressing one audience. They did not come with a list of demands or complaints, they merely asked us to take back some observations and suggestions as to how the final days of the campaign might go.

In particular they highlighted the use of language and the various interpretations and nuances that can be taken from well intentioned statements. As an example they cited the Taoiseach's recent comment that de-commissioning will not be an obstacle, while they individually know what the Taoiseach means, there are those in the Unionist community who will seek to spin it in a certain direction. They suggest that the Taoiseach might instead speak of **no one being permitted to wreck the agreement**. Similarly in the case of prisoners they suggest that we speak of prisoners **not** being released **unless** there is peace (i.e. only where their organisations are not engaged in violence).

When asked why prisoners, de-commissioning and Sinn Féin's participation in an Executive are the main issues emerging in the campaign, they responded that these are

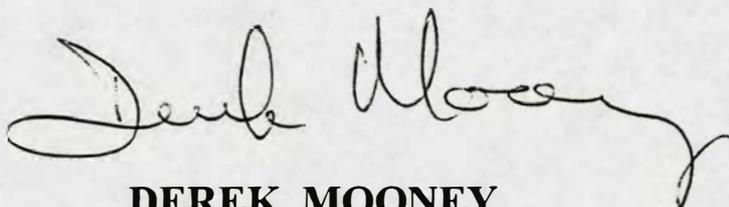
the most emotionally charged issues that permit the maximum mis-reading by the DUP/UKUP. While constitutional matters are equally charged they believe that the agreement is sufficiently detailed and constructed to allow the UUP argue the case effectively.

Again we would mention the openness and friendliness of the discussions. We all agreed to keep in contact and exchanged phone numbers to facilitate the process. We apologise that the attached report is so lengthy. However, as we covered so much at our meeting and considering the depth of those discussions, they are in reality quite brief.

With kind regards,



PAT HYNES,
088 270-6735



DEREK MOONEY,
086 265-2245

MEMO

F.a.o. Dr Martin Mansergh,
From: Pat Hynes & Derek Mooney
Re. Private meeting at Hillsborough, Saturday May 9th 1998

May 11, 1998

This is a note of a meeting held outside Hillsborough on Saturday May 9th 1998. In attendance were the following people, all of who fully support the Agreement and the Yes campaign. All noted that they were attending in a private and personal capacity:

Pat Hynes, Fianna Fáil, Dublin South

Derek Mooney, Fianna Fáil, Dublin South-Central

David Thompson, Chairman of the Portadown B Branch of the UUP

Dermot Nesbit, UUP spokesman

Graham Montgomery, education committee of the Orange Lodge

The meeting was suggested by Mr Thompson to discuss the language as well as the nature and strategy of the referendum campaign. In total the meeting lasted for three hours and all those in attendance said they would make reports of the meeting to their respective parties. Mr Nesbit did state that he had discussed and cleared his attendance at the meeting with Mr David Trimble, M.P.

The following points were discussed:

1. We all agreed that we were attending out of recognition of the fact that the referendum was being conducted in two parts of the Island and that by extension there were two different sets of dynamic at work for the Yes campaigns. We recognised the need for the UUP to enter the proposed Assembly elections on the back of a significant mandate from the unionist community.
2. The Unionists believe that the referendum and Assembly elections represent one process in two stages. They believed that the No strategy was to maximise support for the No campaign in the referendum and build on this support in the Assembly elections the following month. There is a real fear in the UUP that if the referendum were passed by only a slim majority - i.e. if the majority of Unionists vote against - the UUP's Assembly campaign would be untenable.
3. In terms of the conduct of the campaign the most fundamental difficulty which the UUP is experiencing is access to television interviews. Editorial policy is such that they are inviting representatives from the Yes and No campaigns without reference to their party allegiance. The UUP's problem is while the Alliance and Women's Coalition speakers address a certain audience, they do not address the UUP audience. McCartney *et al.* take these opportunities to demonstrate how liberal the agreement is and how detrimental it is for UUP voters to support it, rather than debating the contents with Alderdice or McWilliams. The result of this type of programming is that the average UUP voter is listening to arguments being made in favour of the agreement by people (Alliance, Women's Coalition) who he/she would have no natural affinity with. On the other side is a unionist party leader articulating in precise terms why a UUP voter should vote NO. Ulster Unionist voters need to see their party leaders tackle Paisley and McCartney head on as opposed to having the arguments made for them by other party leaders noble though their intentions are.

4. On a related matter they readily conceded that they were at a disadvantage in that they had few *political heavyweights* available to field in response to Bob McCartney, Ian Paisley, Peter Robinson, Nigel Dodds, Martin Smyth, Willie Ross etc. In essence the main Yes speakers for the UUP would be Ken McGennis, John Taylor, Reg Empey and Dermot himself.
5. The UUP identified several key issues which they believed had caused and could cause further problems including prisoners, decommissioning, as well as some demonstration that violence had finally come to an end as a means of achieving unity. They pointed out that the release of prisoners had to be controlled and directly connected to the maintenance of a peaceful environment so as to ensure that those being released would not drift back into previously practised paramilitary activities. We pointed out that the agreement was quite specific on the issue of prisoners and the requirement that their organisation would have to demonstrate in the period prior to their prisoners' release that they were committed to peace and democratic means.
6. They suggested a specific way in which the Irish Government could deal with a difficulty experienced by UUP campaigners. They suggested that the language used by the Government when making statements on prisoners be moderated. Rather than feeding the DUP myth that the prison gates were about to be opened and everyone let out, they suggested that we talk in terms of: **"Prisoners will NOT be released unless there is peace."** They argued that there was no substantive difference in content, but that the language used in the campaign had to be more robust given the forces on the No side. In reply we said that there had to be recognition that those organisations maintaining the peace should not suffer for the actions of those who did not. They agreed
7. Dermot Nesbit said while prisoner releases made to copperfasten Sinn Féin's support for the Yes campaign could be understood, he could see no justification for any further concessions to Sinn Féin after their special Árd Fheis. Any such movement by the two Governments between the close of the Árd Fheis and polling day would only bolster the No campaign
8. The question arose as to the murder of Detective Garda Gerry McCabe in the context of prisoner releases. They made the point that the No side was feeding perception that the Irish Government was indulging in double standards between the lives of RUC/Army personnel and Gardai. We made the point that in the McCabe case there had been no convictions on any of the charges awaiting hearing. We pointed out that prisoners serving sentences for convictions relating to scheduled offences were the only prisoners in the reckoning for release in two years. Given the fact that the individuals were only charged with the murder and not convicted they would not qualify for the proposed release subject of course to their convictions in the courts. We perhaps need to clarify when the clock starts the count down to the commencement of releases.
9. The issue of decommissioning is proving an enormous concern to the Unionists in accepting the bona fides of Sinn Féin. We asked them if they could appreciate the tactical manoeuvring in which Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness were involved and the fact that once they entered an Assembly, not to mention an Executive, their influence the more hard-line elements within republicanism would all but cease to exist. We pointed out our belief that the last thing Gerry Adams, or anyone, wanted was a well-armed rump of republicans driven by the view that their own leadership had betrayed them. To our surprise Dermot Nesbit readily conceded that such a situation was in all likelihood the case and that if half of what he had heard, through the chair, from McGuinness and Adams during the negotiations was correct then he believed that things looked extremely positive. However just as the Irish Government cannot persuade unionists that this is the deal for them in terms of safeguards, such as consent and so forth, neither can they be seen to advise or pressure republicans that this is the deal for them for fear of what their own supporters might suspect, not to mention the protagonists in the No campaign.
10. We pointed out that we see it as our responsibility not only as the Irish Government but as the largest Nationalist party on the island to oversee that parties involved in the democratic nationalist consensus for peace maintain constitutional as well as democratic principles toward a settlement.

We also pointed out that the centre of the consensus comprised of policies based around agreement and consent as well as the principles of peace and democracy. We had won support from the people of the Republic in consecutive elections for our efforts to convince non-democrats of the merits of politics based on the principles outlined above and that we would not permit any group how ever large or small to wreck the agreement of April 10th.

11. They seized upon the point above and said forcefully that their electorate was not hearing the Irish Government saying this. They strongly believe that a clear statement to this effect from the Irish Government would bolster the Yes campaign and cause severe difficulties for those in the No campaign.
12. The point was made to us that **Sinn Féin had not signed the Agreement on Good Friday** opting instead to return to their party for approval. We said that following ratification they never said that they would not sign. They were quick to point out that the Loyalist parties had signed without any equivocation and that a similar gesture by Republicans would ease pressure on unionist concerns in relation to the end of violence. It would also blunt the effect which McCartney and Paisley would have in the closing weeks of the campaign. We asked that they not call for such an action, as whatever the UUP or the British Government asked or demanded would likely be turned down as non-obtainable. X
13. A related point was a request for a form of words from Sinn Féin that the war was over. Again we counselled against the UUP publicly setting the parameters for such a wording but that we would take the message back. They believe that some form of statement by republicans that they are committed to making the future peaceful and ensuring that their influence is brought to bear (in a democratic sense) on those wishing to wage war. The UUP don't need these statements for themselves, they believe that such statements would speak for themselves in terms of mitigating the Paisley/McCartney propaganda.
14. In terms of Sinn Féin taking seats in an executive Dermot Nesbit said that such a development would prove an easy enough hurdle once the other more immediate concerns were out of the way, particularly if Sinn Féin clearly signed the Agreement as a total package and were not seen to cherry-pick. Regarding de-commissioning, weapons such as Semtex as opposed to guns were of greater concern to him.
15. The Taoiseach's speech at Arbour Hill was something that gave a little solace to Peter Robinson who isolated the paragraph he wanted and made hay while the sun shone so to speak. We said that the part of the speech refereed to in the media was a statement of fact to the extent that the people of Northern Ireland in the purest sense possessed the right of self-determination and consent as to their future. The British Government could not end the Union with^out the consent of the people of Northern Ireland.
16. There was also concern as to the subsequent assembly election scheduled for the end of June. Dermot Nesbit believed the 25th of June this was just ten days from the annual Drumcree march and could cause the UUP difficulty in the run up to poling for the assembly. A tentative request was made for us to examine if a protest was to go ahead could it be low key. We said that last year the residents had blocked the road but that the RUC had battered and beaten the Residents from the roadside thus resulting in the wave of violence across the Northern Ireland. They said that any ambivalence or outright rejection of the right of Protestants to enjoy their traditional celebrations would be tantamount to handing Paisley and McCartney a propaganda coup at the assembly elections.
17. They are confident that the Agreement will be passed, however they are concerned that Unionists are seen to clearly back it at the referendum. They reminded us that in Northern Ireland events, such as the Drumcree march, can overtake the political process and de-rail even the best of intentions. They believe that the march if badly handled on either side has the potential to weaken Trimble in the Assembly elections to the advantage of Paisley and McCartney.

18. In terms of the internal UUP organisation they did not hide the fact that they are experiencing problems. The party was experiencing financial problems it has approx. £200,000 facing into both a referendum and assembly elections. While the Agreement was endorsed substantially, many of those against are the more active members of the party. Dermot Nesbit referred to himself as a Corporal who had suddenly become a General and said that the decision of some key elements of the party such as the Young Unionists, the Lawyers Group and most MPs to oppose was causing major difficulties. He acknowledged that there might still be some *sleepers* from the No side within the party who will not identify themselves until after the Assembly elections and then offer themselves as candidates.

The meeting drew to a close in an upbeat atmosphere that a sufficient level of support could be obtained amongst Unionists for the agreement but that the next week was crucial. We said that the Sinn Fein conference on the agreement could produce significant momentum in itself and would hopefully allow Republicans to address the concerns discussed.