SECRET

cc PS to Chairman
Dr Oliver
Mr Blackburn

MR IAN BURNS:

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS TO PARTIES

1. As requested, I attach some suggested questions.

2. I have concentrated on UUUC/SDLP as the main protagonists.

3. We suggest S of S sees everybody who wants to talk to him - err on the side of latitude in seeing Members.

4. I suggest you concentrate on Conclusions in UUUC report and ignore 'Draft Bill'.

5. Try to look forward from the Report rather than allow them to rake over the debates in the Convention.

6. Try to encourage parties to engage in further talks by picking up the points of broad agreement indicated in the Summary of Proposals (by the way SDLP do not like this document) - force them to engage in a Socratic dialogue which will encourage re-examination of the bases of their positions.

7. These are preliminary questions - I am presuming on possibly three rounds of talks in the present series.

Francis Hayes

M N HAYES
13 November 1975

SECRET

SOME SUGGESTED PRELIMINARY QUESTIONS ARISING OUT OF CONVENTION REPORT

UUUC

1. Can they produce a greater measure of agreement which might commend the Report to Westminster?

2. Report suggests a return to pre-72 Stormont - which did not work - why should this?

3. If other models were discussed, why were they rejected?

4. What do they really want to secure:

   (a) Protestant dominance; or

   (b) freedom from threat of being submerged in Irish Republic?

5. If (b) what other ways have they considered for ensuring their objective which might have fitted the intentions of the Act?

6. What is the attraction in the Committee System for SDLP - either Committees have power (which might satisfy opposition, but stultify administration) or they are innocuous and unsatisfying. If Committees are powerful - is this not 'power-sharing'. What is the objection in principle? How far are they prepared to go to improve their offer?

7. Report very thin in many areas - which would they like to expand on?

8. Has UUUC any 'hidden proposal'. If so, what?

9. Would they accept a statutory duty to maintain reasonable relations with R of I if there were no prescribed institutions?

10. Have they thought of the effects of rejection and rebuff on SDLP?

11. If SDLP demoralised and destroyed, who would fill the political vacuum in the Catholic community?

12. In what way can SDLP make themselves acceptable to UUUC?

13. They want a devolved government quickly - what will they compromise to get it?

14. What response by S of S would make it easier for them to continue to seek agreement?

15. Would they wish to see Convention recalled? In what circumstances? For how long? To do what?

16. On what evidence do you base the contention that all sections of the community will identify with the structures you propose?

17. What about the RUC?

18. When will you produce the specific arrangement for securing the assistance of the armed forces (par 68)?

SECRET

SDLP

1. SDLP apparently advocating return to 1973 Act arrangements. Why should they work now if not in 1974?

2. If SDLP has any other proposals. What are they?

3. What does SDLP wish to achieve - fair deal and dignified role for Catholic/Republicans?

4. If so, is Cabinet membership the only way to ensure this?

5. What other models did they consider? Why were they rejected?

6. Look at the whole map of public administration - there are many loci of power. Would SDLP explore a more complex package aimed at providing power and leverage distributed through the system?

7. What do their people want - jobs, houses, security - or influence on legislation?

8. Why can they not come out for RUC? This is not a bargaining counter and would improve standing with UUUC? What happens if no agreed devolved institutions - do they withhold consent indefinitely?

9. What about realistic Irish Dimension - would they accept statutory duty to maintain good relations and co-operation in social, economic and security matters?

10. How important are symbols - cabinet membership, governor, privy council etc?

11. They were prepared to consider a coalition without statutory guarantees - on what grounds would they pursue this line?

12. Would they rather deal with UUUC or UWC? What happens if they gain an agreement which destroys or discredits loyalist leadership (as Faulkner, Craig, Geo Green etc).

13. They had a statutory guarantee in the 1973 Act - is any such guarantee enforceable in a modern society against the wishes of a sizeable minority?

14. Could they take part in talks seeking widespread agreement if a reasonable 'agreed' report were virtually guaranteed acceptance by Parliament?

15. Should Convention be recalled? If so for what? For how long and in what circumstances?

16. If not, how should agreement be sought?

17. What room for manoeuvre on their proposals?

18. Does Committee system represent a form of power-sharing? What would make it better?

19. How can 'power-sharing' in cabinet be reconciled with collective responsibility?

20. They want a devolved government - what will they compromise to get it?

21. Referenda North and South might be interpreted as an attempt to produce an All-Ireland vote which might be used against loyalists. Would not Unionists resent having to have their institutions approved by people in the Republic?