

CONFIDENTIAL

22/6

(6)

cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B)- M
PS/Mr Scott (L&B)- M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Brennan - M
Mr Carvill
Mr Angel-M Mr Doyle-Ditmas.
Mr Abbott - M
Mr Lyon - M
Mr Reeve
Mr Bickham - M

NOTE FOR RECORD

MR J HUME; MR MARTIN SMYTH; MR K MCGINNIS

Mr Hume

1. I travelled from Heathrow to central London with Mr John Hume. The following points were covered.

Election

2. SDLP were pleased - their election organisation had been better, but in his visits to all Northern Ireland constituencies Mr Hume had seen weaknesses. He now had first-hand knowledge of these [and I gather from Mr Eamon Hanna, SDLP Secretary, that an organisational conference will be held in three or so weeks time by the SDLP]. Mr Hume was encouraged by the number of young SDLP members, though I suggested that these people, and the newer Councillors, needed to be brought more to the centre of the Party and be given responsibilities.

3. Sinn Fein personation had been heavy in Fermanagh, Foyle and Mid-Ulster, but less in West Belfast. Mr Hume believed that even on a very conservative rate of 20 personations per ballot box the Sinn Fein total would have been in the region of 10,000 - he thought the figure would be much higher. He hoped the anti-personation legislation would be introduced and effective for the Local Government elections. In this context Mr Hume wondered if the presiding officers' copies (only theirs) of the electoral lists could include the date of birth of the elector: this should then enable the election staff to take action themselves to prevent the stealing of votes by persons who are either obviously the wrong age or who cannot confirm their date of birth.

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4. Mr Hume recognised that he had got a number of Protestant votes - including some papers "1 Paisley, 2 Hume". He regretted that it was not possible to analyse the transfers more fully because he believed this would have shown cross-community support for SDLP. /But I suspect such support would be limited to an anti-Sinn Fein contest of the Euro election type/.

Mr Hume believed that many Catholic voters now reaching eighteen had been too young to be involved in the emotions of the hunger strike, and he thought this was presenting a more difficult task for Sinn Fein recruitment in the new elector age bracket.

Way Forward

5. Mr Hume welcomed the tone of the Way Forward, but he said he had not studied it. Insofar as he understood it he felt that the current Boards should be left alone. I asked if the "thinness" of administrative devolution would make it easier for the SDLP to accept participation - provided other of their objectives were met in some way. Mr Hume said he did not object to working together: he had just written to Dr Paisley and Mr Taylor to ask them to join him in working out an agricultural policy approach for their next five years, and he believed in this sort of sectoral co-operation. /See also paragraph 9 below/.

6. The SDLP's unwillingness to enter the Assembly was underlined. The DUP motion commending Lord Justice Gibson's statement seemed to Mr Hume to be an illustration of the difficulties SDLP would face in a central Assembly.

Mr Justice Gibson

7. Mr Hume said that whilst many of the working class nationalists "expected it", there were many of the nationalist middle group who had been shocked by the Judge's statement. Mr Hume knew that a number of respected Catholic lawyers had re-examined their willingness to take judicial office if asked. It was not the recent acquittals that caused the trouble, but the manner in which these had been presented, and the feeling among some Catholics that only a limited number of judges were now allowed to hear cases against the security forces. Mr Hume hoped to have a word about this with the Secretary of State (whose office I spoke to).

Mr Martin Smyth; Mr Maginnis; Mr Nicholson

8. The UUP members were returning to Belfast when I saw them. This note reports my gleanings. It appeared from a general exchange (not directed at me) that the UUP are reconstituting their Assembly Committee chairmanships largely to exclude the Westminster MPs. Mr Smyth has been recommended however to the Speaker for the Finance post, with Mrs Dunlop for Health, and if I recall correctly Mrs Simpson for vice Chairmanship on Education. Mr Bell is likely to be included in the team, perhaps taking Mr Maginnis' place as vice-Chairman of the Finance Committee. It is not clear yet how the Speaker will react. Mr Smyth will stay on the Report Committee. I do not know what happens to the Security Committee under these proposals, nor was the Speaker's response known to the MPs.

9. The approach of the UUP Members to The Way Forward varied. Mr Smyth seemed to favour the retention of the various Boards, but replacing all but the specialist members by politicians. (This is not what I understood to be Mr Miller's view though he too might have had some political membership in mind). Mr Maginnis said he was fed up with the Assembly's plenary sessions and the DUP attitudes there and elsewhere - he would not attend any marches, or ceremonies to inaugurate new July 12 arches, if he had to share a platform with Dr Paisley. He

felt the Assembly should meet only once per week or once a fortnight, and the main work should be committee centred. I asked Mr Maginnis if he had put these notions to Mr Hume, whose "task oriented" approach they seemed in part to match. Mr Maginnis said he had just spoken over a drink to Mr Hume and "Mr Hume's comment had been not "when" or "how" but "where"?" Mr Maginnis said City Hall had been used in the past and his personal view was that the place to meet could be there again if need be.

10. Mr Smyth was afraid the DUP tactics in the Report Committee would be to try to bounce elaborate ideas on the Official Unionists, who would have to vote for them because they represented aspirations. For this reason his tactics were to keep the debate centred on the practical low key approach represented by administrative devolution.

11. These comments reflect different aspects of UUP thought - they were made separately and not in a general discussion. Mr Maginnis is not an Orangeman and is in part excluded from some of the counsels to which Mr Smyth is privy. He said his "heart" (sic) would prefer an Assembly, but he is clearly fed up with the bickering and posturing there and wonders if the effort is worthwhile. Hence his emphasis on a more practical solution. I believe the authors of The Way Forward favoured administrative devolution for its practical and its philosophical properties ie because it does not involve Ministerial power sharing.

12. In an aside Mr Maginnis said he thought Mr Mallon was losing out within the SDLP, and he thought Mr Haughey was offering him the opportunity to stand for a seat in Louth. This is a piece of gossip we have heard before. It may suggest Mr Mallon's current unhappiness within SDLP, though I believe the tide could change if Mr Hume cannot continue to deliver in post-Forum talks and in the May Local Government election.

13. The MPs had just received their Order Papers - they expected Dr Paisley to enter the debate on the basis that Parliament should not debate a foreign report. /Did Parliament debate the Brandt Report?/

14. All the Unionist MPs expressed regret that when VIP's visited their constituencies, neither NIO nor NI Departments (all referred to as "the NIO"!) accorded them the courtesies which would be given to their counterparts in GB. I believe the MPs are ultra-sensitive, but we have on occasions overlooked the proper recognition of the local MPs and need to remember their interest. I am following this up separately to see if we can revise any guidelines for those preparing visits.

AM

A J MERIFIELD

22 June 1984