

E.R.

12/7
CONFIDENTIAL

39

PC 11/17
TP 12/5/7

PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/Ministers (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Brennan
Mr Angel
Mr Burns
Mr Doyne Ditmas
Mr Merifield
✓ Mr Carvill
Mr Abbott
Mr Lyon
Mr Reeve
Mr Wood
Mr Templeton
Mr Buxton
Mr Coulson
Mr Radcliffe

① Molyneux
② Molyneux

NOTE OF A MEETING WITH MR JOHN HUME, MP

1. The Secretary of State had a meeting on 11 July with Mr John Hume MP. Mr Sandiford was also present.
2. Mr Hume began by raising the case of Bernadette Boyle. That discussion has been recorded separately.
3. The Secretary of State then gave Mr Hume an account of his discussions with Mr Napier and Dr Paisley. (Separate notes on those conversations have already been distributed). The Secretary of State urged Mr Hume to disregard Dr Paisley's rhetoric and to talk with him informally in Strasbourg. Mr Hume agreed that he would do so.
4. The Secretary of State then suggested gently to Mr Hume that the objective in informal talks among the party leaders should be to find a way towards a political solution within Northern Ireland. Mr Hume said that he did not think that was possible, because it would not be acceptable to his supporters. He had been distressed, after agreeing informally with Mr Molyneux to have discussions without pre-conditions, to find that

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Mr Molyneaux had announced publicly to his own supporters that these discussions were to take place and were to be only with reference to an internal solution.

5. Mr Hume said that he thought that talks among the parties were likely to be without result, but that they were perhaps a necessary prelude to a wider agreement to be reached between the governments of the UK and the Republic of Ireland. Mr Hume said that, although he had at first been disappointed by the Secretary of State's speech in the House of Commons debate on the Forum Report, he had on further study found passages in it which might give him cause for optimism. Mr Hume referred particularly to the statement that, if inter-party talks did not bear fruit, the UK Government could not "stand idly by". He took this to mean that, after inter-party talks had failed, the UK Government would step in to arrange a solution.

6. The Secretary of State said that it was important that Mr Hume should be clear about what was and was not possible. The UK Government as a whole was perhaps more ready than before to try to facilitate a solution which would give legitimate expression to the aspirations of the minority in Northern Ireland, but any progress for the foreseeable future could only be progress within Northern Ireland. There was no prospect of new institutions which involved a sharing of sovereignty over Northern Ireland with the Government of the Republic. Mr Hume referred to newspaper reports of recent statements by the Conservative MP Mr Sylvester, which indicated that some form of joint authority would be possible. The Secretary of State emphasised that Mr Sylvester was not in any way representing the views of the UK Government, and that the Government's views were in fact that joint authority, in the sense of joint sovereignty, was not possible. It was a separate question whether some kind of consultative role for the Government of the Republic might be discussed; but joint authority in the sense of Chapter 8 of the Forum Report was not possible.

7. Mr Hume said that he was disappointed to hear this. He had been saying for some time, and there were signs that the rightness of his view was increasingly recognised, that the fabric of society in the North was in danger of destruction, and that this breakdown could spill over into the South. It was for that reason that he emphasised the importance of finding a solution for the whole island of Ireland. He thought that it was a mistake to keep putting emphasis on the importance of sovereignty, since he thought that sovereignty itself was an increasingly out of date concept. He sensed a strong will throughout Northern Ireland for some settlement to be made. Throughout the European election campaign, he had experienced no expressions of Protestant hostility, even in areas where previously he could not easily have gone. And he had received second, third or fourth preference votes from a wide range of voters, including those who voted Unionist on first preference. That had never happened before, and in his view indicated some greater readiness for the whole community in Northern Ireland to draw together to find a settlement. At the same time, Mr Hume saw the large vote for Dr Paisley as an astute attempt by Unionists to ensure that the playing of the orange card had a determining influence on the form of settlement to be reached. Mr Hume commented also that the European election result had done no more than buy some time in holding off the threat from Sinn Fein. The local elections of 1985 would be a very hard struggle. If Sinn Fein then made a significant advance (or if Sinn Fein came to hold the balance of power in the Republic), the chances of reaching a settlement would be remote. Mr Hume thought that grass roots unionist opinion was more aware than the unionist leadership of the urgent need to reach a settlement.

8. The Secretary of State said that he hoped the parties would have informal discussions over the summer. At the same time, the UK Government would be having talks with the Government of the Republic. Those discussions would explore what structures

or arrangements would be supported by the Government of the Republic. The Secretary of State hoped that, if proposals were supported by the Government in the South, that would enable them to assist the SDLP to reach agreement within Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State recognised that, while any new arrangements for Northern Ireland would have to apply only within Northern Ireland, they would have to be consistent with the long term aspirations of the Nationalist community. Mr Hume confirmed that he recognised that those aspirations could only be long term for the time being.

9. The Secretary of State said that the UK Government would also itself be considering possible future arrangements for a form of assembly in Northern Ireland. It was for consideration how fail safe mechanisms might be built in, and how the inherent instability of power sharing might be avoided, while at the same time allowing a fair degree of involvement by the representatives of the minority. One arrangement might be for difficult issues to be referred to the Secretary of State, perhaps through some intermediate tier acting as a filter. Mr Hume said that he recognised that power sharing was inherently unstable. In the previous power-sharing arrangements, it had been agreed to leave anything too difficult on one side for later consideration, but it had been recognised that this could not last and indeed it had not lasted.

10. Mr Hume said that he would have discussions with Dr Paisley, Mr Molyneaux and Mr Napier. He thought that he should urge them to recognise the dangers of social breakdown. Mr Hume commented that his own experience of life in Derry had given him a particularly strong sense of the dangers. There had been incidents such as those to which he had referred in his speech in the Forum Debate; and more recently there had been the burning of flats and a church. Mr Hume said that the burning of the church, which had embarrassed the Provisional IRA, was evidence that even they were losing control of people disposed to violence. Mr Hume also asked that everything

possible should be done to stop Orange Order Marches through Catholic areas - not only because such Marches were undesirable in themselves but also because of the opportunity they gave the Provisional IRA to argue that compromise was interpreted as weakness. The Secretary of State said that he had discussed the arrangements for Marches with the Chief Constable, who would do his best to ensure that social disorder was prevented. The Secretary of State asked Mr Hume to let him know of any events which gave particular cause for concern.

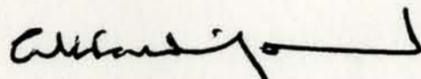
11. In discussion of personation, the Secretary of State told Mr Hume that the Government would be going ahead with legislation early in the new session of Parliament. He said that the legislation would be difficult, because it was not possible to adopt any simple solution such as relying on thumb marks; and it did not appear that asking for date of birth (as Mr Hume had previously suggested) would be very worthwhile. The Secretary of State said that he thought, however, that the arrangements included in the legislation - even if they were not a complete answer - would be very helpful, and he hoped that the new Act would be passed by Christmas 1984 so that the arrangements could apply for the 1985 local government elections.

12. Mr Hume said that he was pleased to hear the legislation was going ahead. He mentioned an incident in his own European election campaign in which an agent had written off to apply for postal votes for people entitled to have them. The agent had, however, apparently applied in the name of the people who were the subjects of the application. There had been no intention to obtain votes for people not entitled to have them, and Mr Hume therefore thought that if any offence had been committed it was purely technical. He expressed some concern that the electoral officer, Mr Bradley, was pursuing the letter of the law with what Mr Hume regarded as excessive rigidity and intensity. The SDLP election agent had been arrested at 5.45 am, and held 24 hours for questioning. The press had reported the incident as

though the SDLP had been engaged in personation; the distinction between the technical offence involved and voting by personation was likely to be lost on the man in the street, particularly in view of the dramatic reaction by the authorities. The Secretary of State did not comment on the merits of the matters complained about by Mr Hume.

13. Summing up, the Secretary of State said that

- (i) the Government of the UK would be talking with the Government of the Republic;
- (ii) he hoped that useful talks would take place between Mr Hume and the other Party Leaders;
- (iii) if discussions progressed, it might emerge that something could be done about an Irish dimension, but it would be important not to try to push this too far; and
- (iv) he would hope to have further discussions himself with Mr Hume and the other party leaders on or about 22 or 23 August.



G K SANDIFORD

12 July 1984