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MEETING WITH UUUC LEADERS 29 DECEMBER 1975

PRESENT: Chairman Mr West
Dr Oliver Dr Paisley
Dr Hayes Mr Baird
Mr Blackburn

1. The Chairman entertained the leaders to lunch. Dr Paisley asked whether the Chairman had any news about a recall. They had decided not to return to a reconvened Convention with parameters etc. Mr Blackburn asked what if there were no parameters? Reply less definite, but IP thought they probably would not come back in any case. Mr West said they might discuss questions of detail, but all three affirmed that they would not have SDLP in cabinet, or an institutionalised Irish Dimension.
2. Mr Baird said they were beginning a series of meetings to inform their people in the constituencies of what was in their report and would have some indication of public opinion even before 12 January. He thought their people would not stand for a recall. The Assembly representatives had already gone too far to meet SDLP who had not moved at all. When asked by Chairman what their aims really were, he said they wanted to keep 'the links' and wanted a devolved government with control of security within the UK. However they were not prepared to pay the price of having SDLP in cabinet, and they abhorred direct rule. If they could not meet their aims within UK then they would have to look at the position again. Independence was not presently an issue, but might become one.
3. Mr Baird and Dr Paisley joined in denunciation of UDA and other protestant paramilitary groups who, they said, were largely gangsters. They spoke of rackets and people who had gained sudden affluence by extortion, protection and intimidation. Mr Baird said the first two years of a devolved government would be extremely tough. They would have to be prepared to shoot down people, some of whom had supported them in the past. Dr Paisley spoke of the danger to life of members of the new government.
4. Messrs Baird and Paisley deplored the Stormont Castle talks with paramilitaries on both sides, which they said were undermining politicians, especially SDLP. They thought UDA in particular who were totally untrustworthy unscrupulous people, were deceiving NIO. NIO thought UDA were in their pocket, and there could not therefore be a repetition of the UWC strike. However when the crisis came UDA would desert NIO and support the loyalist cause. [Both EB and IP seemed to have some certainty and some cause for justification in this knowledge.]

5. Dr Paisley displayed a very clear appreciation of Westminster attitudes. He said that there was very little interest and the bi-partisan policy would ensure the acceptance of anything S of S proposed. Even Airey Neave and J Biggs-Davidson were pushing them in the direction of voluntary coalition, which they would not have. He thought S of S would recall Convention in quite outrageous terms which would infuriate loyalists. He thought a confrontation with British Government might as well come sooner as later, and said they would back down in the end and concede devolved government on loyalist terms because British parliamentary and public opinion was totally fed-up with Ulster. He denied the value of being tied to the British economy at the present time - more of a liability than a help. He also denied direct rule, which he claimed was deliberately inefficient and oppressive. He thought that the closure of Rolls Royce was another turn of the screw. H Wilson was a United Ireland man at heart and wanted to make membership of UK so uncomfortable for loyalists that they would acquiesce in some deal with the Republic. He alleged talks were going on about the possible introduction of a UN force. At the same time he expressed himself against integration which would not in any case be 'real integration'.
6. Mr West remained fairly quiet throughout, but when called upon by Dr Paisley, confirmed the line taken by the others - no reason to attend at a reconvened Convention, no possibility of any further movement towards the SDLP. He thought the matter now lay with S of S who should tell SDLP that the game was up. Asked by Chairman he said they had not told S of S directly of their attitude to recall, but proposed to do so on Monday 5th.
7. MNH asked if it were possible to see discussions being carried on in any other forum than a reconvened Convention. All parties had professed themselves keen on inter-party talks and UVUC and Alliance were willing to extend the Convention for this. Was this a possibility? and who would organise and conduct the talks? There was little enthusiasm for this. Dr P said they had made all sorts of suggestions such as two-tier cabinet and development of the Committee idea to SDLP who had refused to discuss them.
8. All three emphasised that any movement would have to come from SDLP. Dr Paisley was more sensitive to the difficulties facing SDLP than the other two, but said the Ivan Cooper wing seemed to have come out strongly at the party conference, and SDLP had hardened their position, especially on RUC and Irish Dimension, which seemed to have receded in importance during the Convention.
9. The meeting lasted almost two hours in a relaxed and friendly atmosphere. Despite an inevitable degree of bluster and sabre-rattling there was the clear impression

of a strong sense of resolve not to participate in a reconvened Convention.
It was difficult to be optimistic of the prospects for successful recall.

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M N HAYES

5 January 1976