



CME 1178/98

HCS/522/98

FROM: JOHN SEMPLE
3 JUNE 1998

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
Mr Colman
Mr Cosgrave

✓
Consider
P
but look
at alternatives

PS/MR MURPHY (DFP,B&L)

ASSEMBLY: PRE-ELECTION CONSULTATION WITH THE PARTIES

Summary

Issue: The need to bind parties into the Transition Programme and assist in its development.

Timing: Urgent - letter needs to issue in advance of the Minister's meetings with parties next week.

Recommendation: That the Minister write to parties in the terms of the attached draft.

1. You will have seen Mr Johnston's submission of 29 May about Mr Murphy's proposed meetings with the parties next week.
2. You will have noted that, at Item 18, it is suggested that Mr Murphy ask the parties for views on the Transition Programme for Assembly members, which is being developed by Gerry Cosgrave along with the help and guidance of Mr Ingram's PPS, Tony Colman.
3. The purpose of this minute is to emphasise the importance which the Secretary of State attaches to the programme. While appreciating that



there are many other important issues that need to be resolved with the parties, including many that related to the Agreement Bill, I believe that the Secretary of State would wish Mr Murphy to take sufficient time with the parties to expand on what is in mind for the Transition Programme and to ensure that a nominee from each of the parties is selected to take the Programme forward thus giving the parties ownership of the Programme.

4. A draft letter to the party leaders is attached. This outlines the concept behind the Programme and makes suggestions as to how it might be implemented. It would be helpful to get the letter out today, so that the party leaders can have some time to consider the issues before meeting Mr Murphy.
5. I am available to meet Mr Murphy if he wishes to discuss these proposals.

John Semple

JOHN SEMPLE

PARTY

PARTY LEADER

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Mr Gerry Adams MP

DRAFT

Dear *Workshop*

A SEMINAR PROGRAMME FOR ELECTED MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY

In preparation for implementation of the Belfast Agreement, I wish to seek your party's views on a proposal to organise a seminar programme to help prepare Assembly members for the advent of devolved rule.

The preparation for the advent ...

The programme would be designed to assist newly-elected members of the Assembly, ~~to understand fully, and be able to carry out effectively, their new roles and responsibilities.~~ At a later stage it could include roles and responsibilities as Ministers and Chairman or Deputy Chairmen of Assembly Committees.

Subject to availability of participants it could begin as soon as possible after the elections and continue from July through to October and perhaps thereafter, depending on the requirements of the participants.

Programme Format

At this early stage it is envisaged broadly that the programme format should be informal and interactive, enabling those participating to benefit from the expertise and experience of a wide-ranging group of experts from home and abroad. It could comprise ~~seminars and~~ workshops lasting one, two or at most three, days.

The seminars could be aimed primarily at small to medium size groups of participants (ranging from say 25-50). These could be held residentially in Northern Ireland but could also include seminars ~~organised~~ in Great Britain

*be held
take place*

and Ireland. However, it might be appropriate on occasions to run major events that would draw in all Assembly members. Examples might include an event to launch the programme, perhaps in the second half of July.

In addition to those elements which could be delivered locally, the programme might include study tours to Europe and America. This would enable members to explore interface issues relating to the European Union and to benefit from the experience available in certain institutions in the United States. Early indications are that September is the earliest practicable date for organising a European element (the European institutions more or less close down in August, and July would also present difficulties with availability) with the possibility of an American dimension to follow in October.

Programme Content

The programme itself could be 'modular' and multi-track ie exploring concurrently different aspects of the new governance of Northern Ireland. Each component could be repeated so that participants could avail of those modules which are particularly relevant to their prospective interests and responsibilities, although some modules are likely to be of general interest. The programme content should be flexible and develop as the requirements of participants emerge. If the parties thought it appropriate, NI Civil Service officials might be asked to attend some of these occasions.

Conclusion

You are invited to consider the proposal for a ~~seminar~~ programme for Assembly members and the suggestions I have made for its format and content. If broadly content, then I would invite you to nominate a representative from your party to work on the development of the concept

through to its implementation. I think the best way to take this forward would be for a small planning team to meet with your nominee as soon as possible.

It would be most helpful if you could give your views and if possible the name of your nominated representative when we meet next week.

Yours sincerely

PAUL MURPHY MP
Minister of State for Northern Ireland