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Reference Code: 2021/94/38

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Denise

I will do a summary
of this detailed note
when I get time

this evening

M. J. ... 12/6

Tuesday

To see please
you may wish to call a meeting
before the minister goes to London.

SECRET

of the N.I. group

Telephone Call from Secretary of State for Northern Ireland
16 June, 1992.

1. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Sir Patrick Mayhew, telephoned me today about lunchtime in the absence of the Minister and spoke at some length about his view of the proposed meeting which is to take place this week to discuss an agenda for Strand Two.
2. I told him that I would convey his views to the Minister who is at present on his way back from Luxembourg via Brussels where he is to give a lecture. Sir Patrick said he would be glad to talk to the Minister further on the 'phone if he so wishes, though he mentioned that he will have business in the House of Commons on Thursday which will take some time.
3. Sir Patrick began by suggesting that it would be helpful if he outlined, as he sees it, what is in the mind of the Northern Ireland parties in relation to the proposed meeting and how he thinks best use might be made of it to achieve progress.
4. Ostensibly, the meeting will be simply about the agenda for Strand Two but the "inwardness" of it is that the Unionists felt unable to go formally to Strand Two until they got a sufficient degree of commitment from the SDLP to the model emerging from the subcommittee in the Strand One talks. Accordingly, Molyneaux with support from John Hume had devised the notion of a meeting involving the Irish Government and the other parties to work out an agenda for Strand Two. The Unionist hope was that they would get sufficient assurance from this meeting of what is likely to be in question in Strand Two to enable them to accept the full transition to that Strand. No doubt the SDLP too will wish, for their part, to be assured that there was "sufficient greenness" likely to emerge in Strand Two to enable them to move away from the proposal for a Commission with a member appointed by the Irish Government which the Unionists had found so unacceptable.
5. However, Sir Patrick said he had found in the talks so far that real progress came from meetings in the corridors and exchanges of all kinds between the parties rather than from formal sessions where he is present. For this reason, while the overt purpose of the meeting would be to discuss the agenda for Strand Two, he hoped that we would not take the line that this could be done


briskly at a short one-day meeting. It would be important, in his view, to allow time over a few days for the process to engage.

6. Sir Patrick referred to the developments last Friday at the meetings in Stormont and said he really thought then that he had come to the end of the road. He had always felt that he could not compel the Unionists to go forward to Strand Two. It would be the worst possible outcome if he were to announce the opening of Strand Two and find that some of the parties simply would not attend. He was very close on Friday evening to giving up and announcing an indefinite adjournment for reflection since he would not wish to preside over a process which was degenerating into disorder. The Unionists insisted that there had to be a more substantial commitment by the SDLP to what was being put forward in the subcommittee report. Instead, there appeared to be absolutely no commitment and there were enormous areas of disagreement. In order to overcome this deadlock, Molyneaux, supported in part by Hume, came up with the scheme of an agenda-setting meeting for Strand Two which would, to some extent, allow each side to "see the colour of the other side's money". The hope was that such a meeting would show what the Irish Government is looking for from Strand Two. That could be, for example, a Council of Ministers whose jurisdiction is not filled in as yet (i.e. a North/South body). This could be enough to allow John Hume to move away from his insistence on the SDLP proposal in Strand One of a Commission to which the Irish Government would appoint one member. This, in turn, would allow the Unionists to say "in these circumstances there is a sufficient amount of agreement to ideas emerging in the subcommittee to allow us to go to Strand Two".
7. The Unionists attach importance to the ideas of a new revised Anglo-Irish Agreement and change in Articles Two and Three of the Irish Constitution. They recognise also, however, that due to the decisions in the Irish Courts it would not be possible for the Government here to go any further in "hardening up" Article One of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. So what they need, therefore, under the guise of simply setting an agenda, is to allow them to feel around and test positions on such issues for Strand Two. This does not have to be acknowledged openly but it is necessary to allow some time for contacts, informal and otherwise, through such a meeting to give a sufficient amount of assurance to the Unionists as to what is likely to be at issue in Strand Two. It may be necessary to accept that the whole process will "flit around from Strand Two back to Strand One and even Strand Three" in what an outsider might regard as a very untidy

- way. But he felt that was the way in which progress would be achieved.
8. Indeed, Sir Patrick said he felt also that the two Governments should begin, perhaps next week, to have a meeting preliminary to Strand Three - a kind of "agenda-setting" meeting. This was the idea underlying the reference in the statement he issued last Friday about a meeting "in Strand Three formation".
 9. In response to all of this, I said that thinking here was that we should be represented at Ministerial level at the meeting this week because of the political importance of the issue. As he knew we had the Referendum on Thursday. This meant that our Minister would be unlikely to be able to attend a meeting in London until Friday - perhaps Friday afternoon.
 10. I was sure that the approach which the Minister would take at any such meeting would be pragmatic and practical and he would share Sir Patrick's wish to achieve success. However, I thought that we would have difficulties about an approach which amounted to some kind of "sampling" of Strand Two which would allow the Unionists to draw back and say that nothing would be achieved now by moving formally to Strand Two. We had always taken the view that, because of the very nature of the Northern Ireland problem, it was not possible to "put the pieces together" by assembling the outline of a "package" in Strand One and we believed, therefore, that this could not be a condition for the move to Strand Two. I thought the SDLP shared this view.
 11. This means that there is a lack of symmetry in the talks in Strand One. The Unionists say in effect "this is our position and we want it agreed" whereas the SDLP say "this is our position but we think the whole problem cannot be addressed adequately in Strand One and therefore, it is vital to move to Strand Two". I said I thought we would have to be wary of an approach to the agenda meeting for Strand Two which gave encouragement and support to this Unionist view of Strand One and which allowed them to "sample" what might be on offer without any real engagement to get into deeper discussions in Strand Two. They could then, after this "window-shopping", either announce that they did not believe it worth going to Strand Two at all on the basis of what they had heard; or, go back to Strand One to press again for semi-final agreement on a package there. This would merely continue the existing deadlock.

12. Sir Patrick said that he thought the important thing would be to ensure that this meeting is not simply a sampling leading back directly to Strand One but a sampling which engages people sufficiently to ensure that it will be followed by full meetings in Strand Two. The trick would be to ensure that this happened and he would try for his part to ensure that it did. (He demurred somewhat at the use of the word "sampling" though he accepted it. He preferred a phrase he used himself - "each party would want to see the colour of the other's money".)
13. In further discussion I said that we had always felt that he himself had an important role in deciding the transition from Strand One to Strand Two. In dealing with Northern Ireland it is sometimes possible to get people to acquiesce to something which they would not themselves have proposed. We feel that he should not wait passively for agreement on all sides but should, at the right moment, bridge the remaining gap by his own decision to propose going forward to Strand Two in the belief that all parties could then acquiesce in this.
14. Sir Patrick, in response, said that he had come to believe that the Unionists had the ring of truth when they said at certain points that they could not carry their people forward with them. Unionists have said to him, especially since the unfortunate leak of the SDLP paper, that some of their followers tell them they are fools to stay at the table so long. The leadership has already used up political capital on this point. He thought John Hume accepted this also. Paisley, for example, had "a hell of a row" within his party. There were shouts heard from within the party meeting room last Friday and Paisley himself was in a terrible physical state. He (Mayhew) feared he would have an attack. He thought Paisley had been quite courageous in agreeing to the proposal which had emerged. He (Mayhew) feared that if Paisley were to lose his standing with the party someone worse would emerge. At the same time he thought progress was being made because there is a very strong public feeling that politicians must pull together. The further down the road we get the greater the momentum which is generated. He added, however, that it is an extraordinarily difficult process. He could say about all the parties "they are as bad as each other - they never deny themselves the pleasure of putting the knife in". Nevertheless, he believed we can make real progress with care in handling the meeting agreed for this week.

15. I returned to the point I made earlier that I thought we would not envisage the meeting taking place before Friday since it was likely to be decided here that our team should be headed at Ministerial level. He said that in that case he wondered if it might not be better to defer the meeting until next Monday and allow a clear run of a few days for the meeting. He thought it far more important to allow a little time for better understanding rather than rush things on Friday. I asked if this would allow time for further objections from the DUP. He did not feel this was likely. It was his view that all concerned do really want to get to Strand Two though for different reasons.
16. We left it on the basis that I would report his views to the Minister and that he and the Minister might be in touch at some point in the next few days.



N. Dorr
Secretary

16 June, 1992.