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16 March 1995

Mr Pat Hennesey
Anglo-Irish Division
HQ

Dear Pat

Meeting with David Boyd, Assistant to Jim Molyneaux MP

I had lunch yesterday with David Boyd. He worked formerly in Northern Ireland for Roy Beggs MP and now works at Westminster for Jim Molyneaux as personal assistant, researcher, speechwriter. Boyd's duties from time to time include briefing the media and undertaking research for other UUP MPs at Westminster.

Boyd is well-spoken, perceptive, and forward-looking. He agrees with a great deal of what John Hume says on Europe and on the relativity of state sovereignty in the modern world. In religious terms Boyd is an ecumenist from a mixed Presbyterian/Church of Ireland background.

I set out below the principal points of our discussion.

Leadership of the UUP

Boyd clearly admires Molyneaux, whom he regards as open-minded and ready to compromise. He feels that the stalking-horse candidate (Reynolds) on 18 March has no real challenger behind him. Boyd gave no indication that Molyneaux is thinking of stepping down.

In the longer term, Boyd feels it is inevitable that the successor will be a member of the parliamentary party, although there has been speculation to the contrary. In the days of Harry West it proved impossible to provide effective leadership from outside the parliamentary group at Westminster.

The electorate for the party leadership is the 850 member Council of the party, made up mainly of constituency representatives but with statutory participation by a small number of others such as women's groups and (I think Boyd implied) the Orange Order. As a rule of thumb, Boyd said that

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the Council is more conservative and less flexible than the average MP at Westminster. This will inevitably colour any leadership contest.

We discussed in general terms the different potential leaders of the UUP. I formed the clear impression that Boyd would favour Martin Smyth. He feels that Smyth's commitment as a Presbyterian Minister should not be underestimated as a possible source of conciliatory thinking. [Comment: I attended the National Prayer Breakfast in November 1994 at which Smyth presided. I was impressed both by the gathering itself and by the contributions of the many Northern Ireland participants including, for example, the RUC man who was first on the scene of the Greysteel killings. I was therefore able to lend some endorsement to Boyd's view.]

Note // Ken Maginnis, whom Boyd also admires, already has a too-liberal profile for the Council. Taylor has no body of committed supporters within the Party organisation.

The future of Unionism

Boyd said that the basic issue is whether the UUP adopts Alliance-type policies or is drawn into the "Unionist family". Clearly Boyd himself favours the first option. He said that Molyneaux has worked hard for the last three years to distance the UUP from the DUP but that the Framework Document is putting pressure on this policy.

// Boyd's other observation was that the UUP needs to develop contacts with Dublin with a view to securing changes in the approach represented by the Framework Document.

The Framework Document

Boyd ran through the most serious UUP objections to the Framework Document:

- * the Panel: the Panel has too much power relative to the Assembly
- * Maryfield: the UUP objects fundamentally to Maryfield
- * North\South body: Boyd reiterated the standard UUP position that North\South cooperation should be agreed in an ad hoc way by a new Assembly
- * Europe: "some members of the party" object to the European dimension
- * *Note* // default mechanism: Boyd said that this, in particular paragraph 47, is the single most difficult part of the document.

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In general, Boyd said that the UUP has decided not to accept the Framework Document\Documents as "the basis" of negotiations. Were it not for the Times leak, "which helped no one", the Party's reaction might have been slightly more favourable.

In the course of discussion on each of the above elements, Boyd remarked that the development of an East\West relationship - "a European Union-style cooperation within the European Union" - could make it easier for Unionists to overcome some of the objections listed above.

The Peace Process

The most important single factor that would influence Unionists to enter serious negotiations is in Boyd's view a serious approach by Sinn Fein and the IRA to disarmament. He joked that "getting rid of the semtex would bring a united Ireland closer by 100 years".

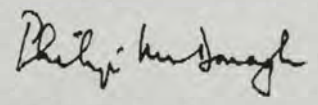
Boyd quizzed me closely on how the Framework Document can at one at the same time draw Sinn Fein into the political process and provide Unionists with stability in a United Kingdom framework. I responded to this on the lines of the Taoiseach's New York remarks of 14 March.

General impression

Boyd, who I would reckon is still under thirty, represents the most flexible thinking within the UUP. He made it clear however that only a minority of the parliamentary party - I would guess Molyneaux, Maginnis, and possibly Smyth - would be comfortable with his general approach and that within activists in the Party in Northern Ireland such openness is even less evident, at least under current circumstances.

Boyd's somewhat forbidding analysis of the Framework Document was less his own personal judgement than the repetition of his party's position. Nevertheless, I felt that even he and relative liberals within the UUP remain ill at ease both with aspects of the Document and with the manner in which it was produced.

Yours sincerely



Philip McDonagh
Counsellor