

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Secret

Discussion with Senator Mitchell, Belfast, 30 September 1999

1. Dermot Gallagher and Bill Jeffrey met Senator Mitchell this afternoon shortly after his return to Belfast and before he began his latest round of meetings with the parties. He is to meet Sinn Féin and the UUP together tomorrow afternoon, and will have a further round of meetings at the start of next week.

Position of UUP

(a) Meeting between Blair and Trimble

2. Jeffrey briefed on Trimble's meeting with PM Blair in Bournemouth last night. Trimble had reiterated that he was committed to a final go at getting the Executive established. But he would need more (in particular from Sinn Féin) than had been available in Castle Buildings. He had, however, placed less emphasis than might have been expected on the failsafe, while continuing to stress the potential role of the SDLP in supporting him should decommissioning not take place.

3. The Glasgow meeting had gone well, and Trimble was hopeful that he could deliver his party in support of a sequenced approach, although some remained "literal-minded" about the simultaneous delivery of decommissioning "product" and an Executive. Jeffrey remarked that Trimble had been offering his party something of a lead and had not so far been slapped down.

4. Trimble had said to Blair that for the time being it was best if the two Governments stood back and let Mitchell continue centre-stage.

(b) Meeting between Mitchell, Trimble and Empey

5. Mitchell, reporting on last Thursday's meeting with the UUP, confirmed that Trimble had indicated that he did not envisage the review coming to a climax

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until after the UUP Conference on 9 October.

6. Trimble had been positive. Both he and Empey expressed an awareness that this would be the last round in the current process.

Position of Sinn Féin

7. Gallagher gave an account of the previous day's meeting between Irish officials and Sinn Féin. He reported Adams's stress on the need for Sinn Fein to be certain of Trimble's commitment to offering leadership and "making the system work". Beyond that, however, Sinn Féin would not be drawn on the substance or detail of any possible formula to break the impasse.

Mitchell's Approach

8. Mitchell readily agreed with our view that, in the light of all the circumstances, it would be premature to ask the parties to look at specific ideas. Rather, he hoped that, in the sessions planned for Friday and Monday next (which he intended would last 6/7 hours and be more intensive than heretofore) he would be able to build some trust. He planned to ask both the UUP and Sinn Féin on what issues each would wish to be accommodated by the other, and on what issues it in turn could offer an accommodation.

Mitchell in Dublin

9. Mitchell will be in Dublin on Tuesday morning, October 5, to address an event organised by Paine Webber, the US brokerage. He will spend the previous night in the Merrion Hotel.

Rory Montgomery
30 September 1999

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