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Counsellors A1.

RÚNAÍOCHT IDIR-RIALTASACH NA BREATAINE-NA hÉIREANN BÉAL FEIRSTE

BRITISH-IRISH INTERGOVERNMENTAL SECRETARIAT BELFAST

Secure Fax No. 111

58

DATE: 7 February 2000 **NO. OF PAGES:** 1

TO: SECRETARY GALLAGHER **FROM: JOINT SECRETARY**

SUBJECT: Trimble and the UUP

I have received from the British side the following briefing on Trimble's current position and prospects within the UUP, based on an NIO "Political Affairs Division Analysis".

The UUP Council meeting on Saturday 12 February is expected to go ahead as scheduled. Trimble is said to have received it "hot and heavy" at last evenings meeting in relation to Patten and is expected to be given a similarly difficult time at Saturday's meeting. The NIO analysis is that Trimble's position has weakened even more in recent weeks - and not least in relation to Minister Bairbre de Brun's decision in favour of citing the main Belfast Maternity in the Royal Victoria contrary to the wishes and advice of the Assembly's Health Committee. Trimble's prior assessment of the Assembly Committees, as presented to his party colleagues, was that they were "strong bodies" which would keep what were described as "rogue decisions by Ministers" under control. The Royal Victoria decision is apparently being taken within the UUP as demonstrating that Trimble's earlier assessment was valueless.

The NIO assessment is now that even rank and file Unionists are tending to believe Gerry Adams rather than David Trimble in relation to what they say about particular issues or events. (Tellingly and interestingly, the NIO analysis comments that Prime Minister Blair falls into that category also.)

Comment:

If the above analysis is accurate, it cannot be ruled out that, whatever happens in relation to other matters, Trimble's position could well become untenable by Saturday and that he may go in any event. In this regard, Reg Empey - who might be seen as a potential compromise candidate between John Taylor and Jeffrey Donaldson - is said to be quite "deflated" at the moment.

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cc'd: Counsellors A1

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Secure Fax No. 112

DATE: 7 February 2000 **NO. OF PAGES: 4**

TO: SECRETARY GALLAGHER **FROM: JOINT SECRETARY**

Possible post-suspension scenario

I have received the following indication of NIO thinking in relation to the Assembly and Executive and to the North-South Institutions in a post-suspension scenario.

In line with our understanding thus far the line, generally appears to be based in the first instance on the hope that suspension of any of the institutions can be avoided but that, if they do cease to function, they will be capable of resuming operation straight away when the present impasse has been overcome.

Assembly and Executive

The attached paper by the NIO, which I understand has been approved by Northern Ireland Secretary of State Peter Mandelson, envisages that salaries of Assembly Members will be cut to pre-devolution level, that Ministers will not receive ministerial salaries, will lose cars and other trappings of office and will receive only restricted briefing as in late shadow-phase, pre-devolution. I understand from the other side that the only variation decided upon by Mandelson related to allowing such restricted briefing arrangements.

North-South

In relation to the North-South Ministerial bodies, the attached speaking points are said to represent the British Government position. I understand that there is no suggestion at present that NIO Ministers would be appointed to the NSMC on a holding basis. I also understand that this approach is based on NIO advice and on the wish to avoid any argument or charge that there is any element of permanence involved in the proposed suspension arrangements. The briefing paper also suggests that the British Government do not envisage proceeding on a unilateral basis in relation to the NSMC and the implementation bodies.

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NORTH-SOUTH

Has the Irish Government agreed to suspend the NSMC and implementation bodies?

- No-one has yet agreed to suspend any of the institutions. Our hope is that suspension can be avoided.

- What we are doing in this Bill is taking a power to suspend devolved government.

- If it becomes clear that there is no alternative but to exercise that power, we will do so. At that stage, our intention will be to work with the Irish Government to suspend the institutions in a manner which most easily allows them to be re-activated once the political difficulties have been resolved.

What if the Irish Government does not agree? Will you go ahead without them?

- We do not envisage proceeding on a unilateral basis. We are in close touch with the Irish Government and will remain so over the next critical days.

- We very much want to proceed in tandem as we have done throughout the peace process.

- We face a very difficult situation and we will watch all developments before taking the necessary decisions. It is too early at this point to plunge into hypothetical scenarios.

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Option 3:

Balanced approach

The Secretary of State might wish to demonstrate that the institutions have ceased to function, while retaining the constituency role of Assembly Members and limited consultation with NI Ministers to increase the capability of the Assembly to resume operation immediately.

Assembly	
Assembly Members' salaries and allowances	Assembly members receive salary, but abated to pre-devolution level. Assembly members receive office cost allowance abated to pre-devolution levels. [Variation: no salary or Office Cost Allowance.] No Party Allowance paid. [Variation: limited funding for parties engaged in Review only.]
Access to Parliament Buildings	Access to Parliament Buildings by Assembly members. [Variation: no access if no salary paid.]
Presiding Officer	Continues to hold office, but salary abated to re-devolution level. Advisor paid.
Ministers' salaries	Ministers do not receive Ministerial salaries. [Variation: Ministerial salaries abated to pre-devolution levels].

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Ministerial support staff	Advisors cease to hold office, Ministers lose cars and other trappings of office and are permitted no access to their former Departments as Ministers. Civil Servants not permitted to brief Ministers. [Variation: restricted briefing arrangements permitted, as in late shadow phase pre-devolution].
Contact with NIO Ministers	Briefing and consultation arrangements between NIO Ministers and NI Ministers on an informal basis.
Access to papers	Papers of former NI Ministers closed, no access by NIO Ministers or new Minister where the post is held by a different individual.

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