

DRAFT LETTER

SECRET

JAO TO SIR FRANK COOPER

December 1975

Thank you for having us to lunch on Monday. As time was necessarily limited we did not manage to cover the ground as fully as we should have wished. May I now amplify a little, please?

We took on board your suggestions about working towards the next major step:

- A. How to present,
- B. The content of Carrot and Stick,
- C. A strong dose of professionalism,
- D. Timings:- soon; brief; but extendible.

On balance we in this Office are against a Recall of the Convention

- E. Because the instrument has not really proved suitable for the task,
- F. and because the performance of the 78 so far does not warrant a further try,
- G. and because the UUUC can so easily argue that they have done all that the Act demanded of them, after having won three Elections in a row in fourteen months.

If nevertheless HMG decide that a Recall is right and proper, then

- H. This news should be broken to the UUUC by S of S in his Talks;
- I. Indeed they ought to be warmed up on the subject because they are now convinced that the Talks have dealt so much with quiet detail that the main drift of their Report must be acceptable to HMG;

- J. No Recall should be even contemplated without an assurance from all major Parties that they will attend and take part - anything less would place the Chairman in a contentious, political situation, to say nothing of the wider repercussions.
- K. The Recall should be directed at and through the Chairman
- (i) in order to give him the initiative in organising the business, engaging experts and preparing the Supplementary Report; and
  - (ii) in order to ease the head-on confrontation; encourage the main Parties to look outward rather than at each other all the time; and generally loosen up the negotiations.

One cardinal principle can be discerned in the whole affair now:

- L. The more the Parties here can agree, the easier it will be for HMG to devolve power; the less they can agree, the harder for HMG.

This principle stands out head and shoulders above all the theories and arguments of the last twelve months and it may be that the time has now come for HMG to state it in stark terms rather than appear to be bidding for voluntary coalition or any other particular solution.

If, again, HMG decide to recall and thus to place renewed faith in local political processes then we would urge very strongly indeed that they should support that faith in two ways:-

- M. By giving Convention Members better status in constituency matters, approaching Ministers etc etc.
- N. By associating Convention Members with the Working Party on Security which you touched on. Incidentally (as in Finance and other subjects) many Members need a great deal of educating and in the event of any Recall under different terms we would plan to confront them much more forcefully with the facts of life. This could be applied with particular benefit to the problems which face the Army, the Police and the S of S.

Perhaps my earlier suggestion could also be borne in mind namely that at least one round of the Talks might be held in London and that S of S might have other Ministers within (eg Chief Whip or Lord President) in order to impress on the Parties the complexities of the Westminster scene and the disinclination of busy ministers and Parties there to take much time off from the many other problems pressing upon Britain in order to coax the Ulster Parties along any particular path.

While very kindly serving us lunch you rapidly sketched a number of options that you thought had to be dismissed: acceptance of the Report; rejection of the Report; Total Integration and some others. Two comments: do not let us be taken as necessarily agreeing that dismissal is right in every case - one could debate each in turn. And, secondly, a further option should really be added, namely what Maurice calls "The Best Buy" that is a workable draft Scheme of Government (drawn by HMG out of the Report and the Debates) that builds on the common ground and that could (after all that has been done and said) now be fairly offered to the Convention for their consideration. We reckon that public opinion would rise to the occasion and might even compel the Convention Members to accept it.

We, in the office, find the whole business as difficult as most people do; but when all of us see one or two points clearly we think it right to put them before you.

As promised, we got in touch at once with Trevelyan and plan to spend some time with him immediately after Christmas.

Yours sincerely

JOHN A OLIVER