

E. R.

CONFIDENTIAL

HCS/2/62

cc. Mr Stephens
Mr Burns - M
Mr Chesterton - M
Mr Spence
Mr Bell - B
Mr G Hewitt
Mr McConnell
Mr Kirk - B
Mr S Hewitt
Mr Wood

Mr Elliott

CHANGING THE CLIMATE

1. I am comfortable with the broad thrust of the draft paper circulated under cover of your minute of 18 February to Mr Chesterton.
2. We face the difficult reality that there are not many ways open to us of changing the perception of one community without changing the perception of the other as well, and perhaps in the opposite direction! If there seem to be separate messages delivered to each of the communities we risk compounding the confusion which has resulted so far from different emphases given by the two contracting Governments (eg "no joint authority" from the British side and "a great deal more than mere consultation" from the Irish side).
3. I agree with the argument set out in paragraph 9 of the draft that "it is important to avoid becoming involved in detailed defence of the Agreement" (eg trying to convince the unionists that Article 1 is a great step forward when frankly no one in that community believes it or is likely to believe it, especially when Mr Haughey points out the plain fact that it is somewhat at odds with provisions of the Irish Constitution). But on the other hand I do not think we want to concentrate with the unionist audience solely on "goodies" for them. I would have thought that we would win more respect and more credence if we were to say rather more clearly than we have done so far:- Yes, of course the Agreement represents some shift of influence in Northern Ireland in favour of of the minority.

CONFIDENTIAL

E. R.

CONFIDENTIAL

Things are not, and were not intended to be, very much as they were before. But this shift has taken place not only on the moral grounds of equity and fairness but on the practical grounds that the support of wider sections of the community is necessary if Northern Ireland is ever to be a more stable place.

Signed

K P BLOOMFIELD
25 February 1987

ID:363

CONFIDENTIAL