

Note for the Record

Nic/SI

cc P/S Chairman
Dr. Oliver
Mr. Blackburn ✓
Mr. Green
File Copy MW.

Conversation with Mr John Hume, 11 August.

1. Mr Hume called on Dr Oliver and myself to report on behalf of SDLP progress in the inter-party talks of which they desired to keep the Chairman informed.
2. He said the meeting on 8 August had been largely exploratory, but friendly in tone. No papers had been exchanged. They had told UUUC that SDLP remained firm in its commitment to power sharing and an Irish Dimension, they felt that many loyalist objections to this were based on misconceptions which they were anxious to remove. They recognised the difficulties this caused for UUUC and were anxious to try to reformulate their position in terms which UUUC supporters would find less frightening. They wished to discover the precise UUUC objections to their proposals.
3. He thought UUUC representatives appreciated their attitude, UUUC objections to power sharing appeared to be based on technical difficulties rather than founded on principle. For example, they asked how power sharing could be reconciled with collective cabinet responsibility or the necessity for a parliamentary opposition. SDLP recognised the validity of these objections and were now preparing to submit them to constitutional experts to seek a way round them.
4. SDLP had assured UUUC that they would give full backing to any agreed institutions and would accept the responsibility to defend them against attack. This had been well received.
5. UUUC had said the 'Irish Dimension' was unlikely to cause insuperable difficulties if the form of government could be agreed.
6. A further meeting would be held on Wednesday 13. They were aware of the need for urgency, but would require at least two more weeks to attempt to reach an agreement. They had agreed to have a three day debate on an agreed motion welcoming the inter-party talks and then to adjourn for two weeks. SDLP back-benchers had reacted badly against this as an abuse of the Convention - they would prefer an honest adjournment. He believed UUUC back-benchers felt the same. It now seemed likely that they would seek a one day adjournment debate on 19th.
7. Mr Hume agreed to keep the Chairman informed.



MNH
11/8/75.