

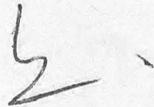
cc PS to Chairman
Dr Oliver
Mr Blackburn ✓
Mr Corbett
Mr Williamson (file copy)

NIC/51

MEETING WITH MR HUGH SMYTH, 20 JANUARY 1976

PRESENT: Chairman Mr Smyth
Dr Hayes

1. Mr Smyth agreed to a first meeting of the recalled Convention on 3 February at 2.15 pm.
2. Mr Smyth said there was no point in having long debates in plenary sessions. The whole thing could be wrapped up in a day if leaders would get together and compromise. It was quite clear to him that S of S, HMG and all parties in Parliament were adamant that there must be power-sharing. He could see no objections to a couple of catholics in the Cabinet - where they would always be outvoted anyhow. His supporters on the Shankill Road took this view also. He wanted a devolved government and was prepared to pay the price by SDLP involvement. The alternative was protracted direct rule which would leave the place a political wilderness.
3. Mr Smyth attributed the intransigence of the UUUC entirely to Dr Paisley who, he said, was opposed to devolved government because he would continue to hold a position as a Westminster member and would not take ministerial office. He said Dr Paisley dominated Mr West and the Official Unionist members were afraid to differ from him in public. Many of them had displayed in private to him a willingness to consider compromise, but they would do nothing in public.
4. Mr Smyth confirmed that his electorate on the Shankill Road would support a more moderate line than that being followed by the UUUC. He was keen on reducing plenary sessions to a minimum in favour of negotiations in the Business Committee. He thought it would help if the Chairman could speak to individual UUUC backbenchers (except those in DUP); Official Unionists were in particular disarray and were embarrassed by being dominated by Paisley.
5. Mr Smyth quoted frequently from talks with S of S and with Mr Middleton (NIO).


M N HAYES

20 January 1976