

CONFIDENTIAL

Pol 2.18.91

Pol 2.18.91

9659
24 DEC 1991

FROM: D McNEILL
Political Affairs Division

23 December 1991

UNDER/ 724/12
SEC
30DEC1991
CENT SEC

cc PS/SofS (L&B) - B
PS/MofS (L&B) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Ledlie - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr D J R Hill - B
Mr Archer, RID, FCO - B
HMA, Dublin - B

30/12

Mr McNeill

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT: PETER ROBINSON MP

I spoke to Peter Robinson and gave him an account of the various political meetings which took place on Thursday 19 December. He had had an account but not a full account of these from Dr Paisley.

2. He reinforced Dr Paisley's view that they would find it difficult to agree to two AI Conferences - one just before and one just after any General Election. He also said that they would not be prepared to commit themselves now to a process which involved a Labour Government and therefore that any agreement, at this stage, to proceed could only be with the present administration.

3. He noted the SDLP's concern over numbers and venue for Strand I but he said nothing about his - not surprising since Robinson has no difficulty with a delegation of ten and a Belfast location.

4. Our conversation mainly focussed on Dr Paisley's objection to Sir Ninian Stephens. I told him that we saw this as a big problem and that we had made clear to the Unionist leaders that a search for a new chairman, even if that was agreed in principle by the others, would effectively rule out talks before a General Election. Robinson asked me if I knew precisely why Paisley was objecting to Sir Ninian. I said not. I said that the only things mentioned were the media interviews and the fact that Sir Ninian is or had been involved with the club of Rome. I also said that Paisley said that there were other things wrong with Sir Ninian but would not spell them out. Finally I said that Paisley seemed to be badly informed in that he had said that Sir Ninian was a politician.

5. Robinson said that he did not know what Paisley had against Sir Ninian. All he knew was that Paisley had asked the Orange Order in Australia to research Sir Ninian but he (Robinson) had not been told what the Order had reported. Robinson clearly has no problem with Sir Ninian and he undertook to have a word with Paisley about the matter over Christmas.

[signed]

D McNEILL
Ext 2238