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15/93

FROM: PS/Secretary of State (L)  
19 February 1993

cc PS/SofS (B&L) - B  
PS/Mr Mates (B&L) - B  
PS/Mr Hanley (DENI, B&L) - B  
PS/Mr Fell - B  
Mr Ledlie - B  
Mr Thomas - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Deverell - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Williams - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mr Cooke - B  
Mr Hill - B  
Mr Lavery - B  
Mr Leach - B  
Mr Marsh - B  
Mr Maccabe - B

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PS/PUS (B&L) - B

MEETING WITH MR HUME: 18 FEBRUARY 1993

The Secretary of State met Mr Hume in his room at the House after TOPS yesterday primarily to tell him about the observation tower to be built at RUC Rosemount. I was also present.

2. The conversation began, however, on a very different subject. The Secretary of State told Mr Hume that he had got into a lot of trouble because of his speech at Coleraine. The Unionist outrage was all manufactured of course but they were linking the speech to the upsurge in Loyalist paramilitary violence. Mr Hume, who looked well but throughout the meeting seemed sunk in melancholia, shrugged. Peter Robinson had been predicting an increase in Loyalist violence well before the speech had ever been written. What was true was that it had had a powerful impact on the other side, the Republican movement were now locked in an intense debate.

3. The Secretary of State said that his aim in the speech had been to make it clear that the British Government had no hang-ups about an united Ireland democratically achieved. It seemed that many Nationalists had simply not realised that until now. Mr Hume said that he was pleased to see that the Government were now taking

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LMCI/SOFS/12947

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PIRA on politically as well as militarily. The Coleraine and Whitbread speeches had undermined the Republican movement's entire political analysis.

4. Sir Patrick said that what the Unionists did not seem to grasp when they complained that all the movement and compromise was in one direction was that when power had been held by one side so completely and for so long that was wholly inevitable. At TOPS, Hume pointed out, Roy Beggs had been talking about high unemployment in Larne, it didn't seem to have even registered with him that the two constituencies with the worst unemployment in the whole of the United Kingdom were Foyle and West Belfast in that order.

5. The Secretary of State recounted something of his experiences at the Connswater Shopping Centre. There seemed to be a genuine ground-swell of public opinion in favour of further talks. Hume agreed. He had recently been invited to attend a meeting of the Chambers of Commerce in Belfast, there had been a huge turnout. Five years ago it would have been unthinkable. These businessmen were almost all Unionists but they had been eager to hear about the industrial development of Derry and had told him that they were not interested in the old political disputes.

6. The Secretary of State mused that it should have been foreseeable that his speech would have made the impression it did. What really got to the Unionists was the discovery that the Government was not their own private government but the Government of all the people of Northern Ireland. Mr Hume said that the Unionists had a lot of catching up to do. Since 1969 the SDLP had transformed Nationalist opinion. It was accepted now that any solution would have to be agreed by all sides. That commitment to agreement was all the guarantee that Unionists could ever need if they but realised it.

7. The Secretary of State suggested that with the Unionists and Alliance now busily engaged in fighting the local elections there was no prospect of getting any talks going again until after May. Hume agreed. The Secretary of State offered the judgement that the DUP would take a caning at the polls; it looked as if Mr Molyneaux thought so as well and was looking forward to achieving his life's

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LMcI/SOFS/12947

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ambition of reuniting the Unionist family.

8. Sir Patrick went on to say that he had had no contact with Dick Spring since the IGC. He had hoped that Spring was going to send invitations to Molyneaux and Paisley but Molyneaux had told him only the previous evening that, apart from a telephone call to Glengall Street asking what Mr Molyneaux's reaction to an invitation was likely to be, there had been no contact at all. That probably suited Molyneaux quite well. Hume said that he had only managed to see Spring the day before and that he had been very busy with putting the Government together and then with the Seanad elections. Would Molyneaux accept an invitation, he asked? The Secretary of State said that he had told both Molyneaux and Paisley that they must, and that it would not look good if Spring were able to say that he had invited them and they had not taken up the offer. Molyneaux was clearly miffed that there had been a public invitation but no letter. Hume said that Spring understood that Molyneaux would not want to travel to Dublin and was himself prepared to travel north.

9. Sir Patrick said that it was infuriating that when a chance existed to do something for Northern Ireland people were more concerned about fighting over parish councils. Hume said that it was a reflection of the siege mentality that was obsessed with power and always looking for hidden agendas. The Secretary of State asked if he would do what he could to encourage Mr Spring; Hume said he would.

10. The Secretary of State then introduced the subject of Rosemount. He hardly needed to tell Mr Hume that the old station was a mess. The RUC now wanted to take down the two sangars and replace the scruffy perimeter fence with a new wall. But they would need to put up a new tower with a sangar on top to protect the base. It would be a tall tower and it would be visible from many parts of the city. It might not be popular, indeed, people might say that it was put there to spy on them. But it would mean fewer patrols and it would bring nearer the day when the RUC were able to patrol alone. He was anxious that people should not feel that this was poor reward for the progress that had been made in Derry. Of course, there had been that dreadful business about Constable Ferguson, who was a Catholic, but that was not the reason for the

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LMCI/SOFS/12947

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tower.

11. The disruption would be kept to a minimum. One lorry would enter the base about 6.00 am and the work would be conducted during day light hours. It would be completed within two days. He had written to the two Bishops to let them know and the Mayor and the SDLP leader on the Council would be told as soon as the work began. He had thought very hard about this decision but the unanimous view of the RUC was that it was needed. Mr Hume was very quiet. The Secretary of State asked people if there would be much public reaction. It would depend how visible it was, said Hume. It would be very visible, said the Secretary of State. Mr Hume shrugged.

12. The conversation returned to loyalist terrorism which the Secretary of State said was worrying him greatly. Indeed, said Mr Hume, two SDLP councillors had been attacked and others had been warned that they were at risk. The RUC were short of intelligence said the Secretary of State, they had lost a major source when Nelson was arrested but there was nothing that could have been done about that the man had to be prosecuted. Was it true, asked Hume, that Nelson had been responsible for the new weaponry the Loyalists seemed to have? It was never one of the charges against him, replied the Secretary of State.

13. As a final point, the Secretary of State told Mr Hume that a part-time member of the RIR was being charged with collusion, it was appalling that it had happened, but excellent that it had been uncovered.

SIGNED

JONATHAN RODELL  
Private Secretary

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