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PAB/4053/DP

Mr Burns - B

- 1. cc PS/Sir K Blomfield - B ^{9/6}
- Mr Chesterton - B
- Mr Miles
- Mr Spence
- Mr Daniell
- Mr Wood
- Mr Hamilton
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Masefield - B
- Mr Kirk - B

2. 1813.

INFLUENCING THE SDLP

I attach a note by PAB on ways of influencing the SDLP which was commissioned at the last meeting of PDG.

[Signed]

J E McCONNELL
Political Affairs Division
8 June 1988

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INFLUENCING THE SDLP

It was suggested at a recent PDG meeting that consideration should be given to ways of influencing the SDLP to contribute constructively to the search for political progress.

In view of his dominance within the party, it is clear that in practical terms, influencing the SDLP means influencing John Hume. We have a good and clear working relationship with him at both Ministerial and official level and on certain issues we can approach him directly. However such interventions can only be within the general framework of John Hume's ideas and in this respect he has his own very firm views about how progress should be made. If we wish to influence these more fundamental perceptions he is not likely to be susceptible to direct approaches by us. Any attempt on our part to influence his thinking would therefore better be done in combination with indirect approaches through contacts we have with other SDLP figures and others outside the Party whom we know or believe to have influence with Hume. If we are able to convince such people of what we are trying to achieve, there is a chance that they in turn, will convince Hume.

The following are considered to have an influence on Hume's thinking:-

Pat Hume	not a political thinker but whom John consults about most major decisions.
Bishop Edward Daly	thought to be a particularly strong influence.
Paul Arthur	Hume is thought to discuss some of his major political initiatives with him.

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Mark Durkan runs Hume's office in Derry and is probably the closest political influence on him.

Sean Farren Hume likes and trusts, as shown by the fact that he has been entrusted with important tasks, such as spokesman on Employment and participation in the talks with Sinn Fein.

Austin Currie no longer an office holder in the party or an elected representative but still thought to have influence with Hume.

In addition to the above, there are a number of other Party members who, while less close to Hume, nevertheless have some influence on his thinking or who are at least consulted before Hume takes any major initiative. These include the Party's other two MPs Seamus Mallon and Eddie McGrady, Joe Hendron, and Brian Feeney (though he has lost favour with Hume over his attempts to secure the nomination for West Belfast at the 1987 General Election). On the other hand there are other office holders who, despite the apparent importance of their positions, in practice have little or no influence on Hume's thinking. These include Denis Haughey, Party Chairman Alban Maginnis and General Secretary Patsy McGlone.

PAB have good contacts with all of the above which could be used as and when necessary as an indirect means of influencing Hume. Other possible sources of influence on Hume's thinking include the Dublin Government and his contacts in the other political parties in the Republic, notably Garret FitzGerald and Alan Dukes, DFA officials such as Richard Ryan and Dermot Gallagher, his United States contacts, and the British Labour Party. With most of these, however, it is probably more a case of Hume influencing them, rather than they him. In the case of the Taoiseach, relations are believed to be now quite good, (having recovered from a very frosty period following the signing of the Agreement) and Hume is said to believe that Haughey would take no step of significance on the North without consulting him. In view of this close relationship, it might

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conceivably be possible to influence Hume by way of the Dublin Government, but any obvious attempt to do so would arouse suspicion and would almost certainly be counter-productive.

Conclusion

For all practical purposes the SDLP position on political development is John Hume's position. If we wish to influence his political thinking we should have to do so very carefully and in only a limited way by a direct approach. This would have to be supported by a more subtle effort, indirectly, through our contacts with other SDLP members (and those outside the party) who are close to him. Even so it is unlikely in present circumstances that we could have any great impact on Hume's thinking. He has his own ideas on the way forward and even if they do not succeed, he is reasonably content with the status quo in terms of the continued operation of the Agreement. There is therefore no very strong reason why he should modify his approach to move closer to ours.

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