

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2015/51/1371
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	20 February 1985
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	4 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of Foreign Affairs
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
<b>Copyright:</b>	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



SECRET

13  
N.F. 5/11/2/5

SDLP Meeting with Secretary of State Hurd, 19 February, 1985.

I got a briefing last night in Downpatrick from SDLP Chief Whip Eddie Mc Grady on their meeting with Hurd. The meeting lasted over two hours and was much longer than expected. Hume missed the first hour - he was elsewhere in Stormont Castle discussing the Molins factory with Rhodes Boyson. Mallon had to leave the meeting early because of his trip to the United States. As well as Mc Grady, Hendron, Currie and O'Donoghue were present for the whole meeting. The atmosphere was good and the talking was frank.

Hurd said that progress can be made on the following four dimensions.

1. The Irish dimension. He is more hopeful as a result of the talks which he and Howe had recently with Minister Barry. He thinks that as a result the two Prime Ministers can have a positive Summit. They will have a meeting in March en marge of the European Council but no date has been set for a meeting in the Anglo-Irish framework. He asked if the SDLP would prefer it before or after the May elections. Mc Grady told him that if he believed the Summit would be a "good one" then it could be held before May but if it did not deliver significantly on an Anglo-Irish dimension then it would be best held after the local government



elections. Mc Grady said the SDLP tried to leave the onus on Hurd. One argument put forward was that if it did not take place before May it would be difficult in June or July because of the marching season to which Hurd replied that there was nothing wrong with holding a Summit then. (Hume seems not to have been present at this stage as Mc Grady said he does not favour a Summit before the elections).

2. Internal Arrangements. Hurd talked of dual tracks, one being the Anglo-Irish dimension and the other inter-party talks. He said he is convinced the unionists want to talk. Inter-party talks can go on contemporaneously with the inter governmental talks. (Mc Grady would prefer the intergovernmental talks to have reached a conclusion before engaging in inter-party talks.) Hurd said the only way to test the sincerity of the unionists is to talk to them. He raised the idea of an intermediary but it wasn't teased out.
3. Identity. Hurd told them there would be no difficulty with matters such as the Flags and Emblems Act and the Voters Register which marks with an "1" those not entitled to vote in local government elections. The SDLP made the point which Mallon had made at their last Conference that these are matters which should be sorted out as of right and which should not depend on a package being agreed between the two governments.



4. Existing Opportunities. Hurd urged them, and members of the minority who are not politically active, to avail of existing and future opportunities by participating in boards, etc. He said he intended to publish a consultation paper shortly dealing with a new Police Complaints Authority and procedures. He also indicated he was thinking of changes in other public bodies. (Mc Grady fears that the British will try to implement this before reaching an agreement on an Anglo-Irish dimension. He wants the latter in place before participating in any Northern Ireland structures).

Hurd emphasised on two occasions, and this made a deep impression on Mc Grady, that the unionists have a veto on 2 above but not on 1,3 and 4. He said the inter governmental talks are none of their business. "They have no veto over talks or over an agreement with Dublin".

Hurd, in answer to a question, said the British wanted the following:-

1. A strong Irish dimension which would induce the minority to have confidence in the system.
2. Devolution of power. The present system in which he takes all the important decisions is undemocratic. But he has told the unionists no power will be devolved without cross community support.



3. An improvement in the security situation.
4. Increased attention to be given to the economic situation.

Mc Grady said that his position is that if the intergovernmental talks can be wrapped up satisfactorily by May, there would be no harm in that being known publicly. His bottom line is an executive function for the Irish government which he defined as a legal right for the government to participate in decision making in Northern Ireland. They told Hurd that the UDR must be disbanded. There was no discussion of Hume's talks with the Provisional IRA nor was there any mention of the Assembly.

*Dec*

D. O'Ceallaigh

20 February, 1985

c.c. PSM

PSS

Mr. Lillis

Box.

A-I Section

Embassy London.