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No 10

Meeting with Ken Maginnis

5 January, 1990

I met Ken Maginnis in Dungannon on Friday 5 January; he was friendly (showing me around his new house with considerable pride) and quite forthcoming. We differed of course on a number of points of substance but the atmosphere was relaxed and cordial throughout. Our discussion lasted almost four hours; the principal points of interest are summarised below.

Contacts between Maginnis and Robinson

- Maginnis spoke with considerable warmth of Robinson. He resents suggestions in some quarters that we are now seeing a "new" Robinson. He maintains that the pre-'85 Robinson was a man of imagination and vision; the Agreement drove him into uncharacteristic behaviour and we are now seeing a reversion to type.
- In the last few weeks Robinson and Maginnis have "not been idle". They have met on more than one occasion at Maginnis' house to discuss how matters might be moved forward. They share the view that the urgent priority at present is the initiation of inter-party talks with a view to the establishment of devolutionary structures in Northern Ireland; they also share an assessment that the only way their respective party leaders can be persuaded into such talks is for the proposal to come from outside (and not from the second tier within their own parties) and to be seen to receive a positive reaction at grassroots level.
- There has been a degree of contact with the NIO as the Maginnis/Robinson talks developed. Maginnis was reticent about this contact and did not specify at whose initiative or at what level within the NIO it took place. However, he said that Robinson, with Paisley's permission (although in the full knowledge that Paisley may deny any involvement if

this should suit him subsequently), has met people in the NIO in the last couple of weeks to discuss possible next steps. Maginnis himself has not been involved in any similar meetings with the NIO - Molyneaux would not authorise him to attend and Maginnis said he would not jeopardise his future within the Party by attending without Molyneaux's authorisation.

Forthcoming Speech by Brooke

- Following Robinson's contacts with the NIO, Maginnis said we should anticipate a major speech from Brooke very shortly and reactions to that speech would be crucial. I mentioned that we had heard on the grapevine about a speech on the 9th and Maginnis (who seemed surprised that we knew anything of it) confirmed that this was the speech in question. He was adamant that he had not seen a text but said he anticipated that it would build and elaborate on Brooke's speech in early December at the Methodist College (this had a strong pro-devolution emphasis). He implied that Tuesday's speech would also contain some reference to the creation of conditions (relating to the operation of the Agreement) which might enable inter-party talks to begin.
- Maginnis said that even as we spoke (Friday afternoon) an important meeting was taking place in Glengall Street at which possible OUP reactions to Tuesday's speech were being discussed. He went on to say that, assuming Tuesday's speech would be along the lines anticipated, he hoped that Dublin's reaction would be positive, or - if this was not realistic - at least would not be negative. Dublin might bear in mind that the purpose of the speech was to strengthen the position of people like Maginnis and Robinson within their respective parties. I undertook to convey this but said that anything bearing on the operation of the Agreement must of course be a matter for joint decision by

both Governments; we had not as yet seen any text of the speech. Maginnis - smilingly - said that "perhaps they're afraid that if they show it to you, you will put difficulties in the way".

Relationships within the Unionist Parties

- Maginnis said there is no attempt to get rid of Molyneaux as OUP leader because of the lack of any enthusiasm for anyone who might replace him. Maginnis' own liberal profile has seriously handicapped him in the leadership stakes (he accepts the description "liberal" but resents the label "moderate"); "no-one would go as far as the gate with Martin Smyth"; and John Taylor is widely disliked. He professed himself certain, however, that Taylor will be the next leader of the OUP.
- He was scathing in his comments about Paisley, and related at length various recent exchanges between Paisley and himself. His conclusion is that Paisley is a bully who will back off in the face of counter-attack. He is certain that if Paisley goes in the foreseeable future, William McCrea - and not Robinson - will become DUP leader. Since, therefore, neither Maginnis nor Robinson have any leadership prospects at present, they prefer to remain as "influential backbenchers" and to seek to move things forward from that vantage point.
- Maginnis argued that Dublin and London spend too much time trying to make progress with the Unionist party leaders and have too many hesitations about the capacity of people like Robinson and Maginnis to deliver. He says this is a mistake - he and Robinson can sell sensible policies to the Unionist grassroots and Molyneaux and Paisley will not stand out against initiatives which are supported at grassroots level.

- He added that Dublin and London should not assume that a negotiating process involving Maginnis and Robinson would be any easier than with the Unionist party leaders; it might indeed well prove more difficult from the two Government's viewpoint since Maginnis and Robinson - more so than the party leaders - "know precisely what we want" and will not concede on substance.

Anglo-Irish Agreement/Relationship with Dublin

- As to what exactly it is that Maginnis and Robinson want, clearly the removal of the Anglo-Irish Agreement remains the primary objective. Maginnis spoke vehemently about the continuing depth of resentment in the Unionist community about the Agreement; he regards the Agreement as unjustifiable, unbalanced, and most of all, in terms of the role it gives to the Irish government, "neo-colonial".
- He clearly sees devolution as desirable in itself and also as effectively a substitute for the Agreement. He appears confident that, given suspension of the Intergovernmental Conference (or creation of a suitable gap - he is not wedded to the term "suspension") inter-party agreement is achievable on devolutionary structures acceptable to both communities.
- He feels that, once a Northern Ireland Assembly was established and had shown reasonable prospects of permanence, Northern politicians could be obliged to choose between a role in the Assembly and a seat in Westminster. He predicted that, faced with such a choice, Molyneux and Hume would choose Westminster (he asked me not to repeat his prediction that Mallon also would), leaving the Assembly in the hands of people like himself, Robinson and McGrady. While Paisley would also want a role in the Assembly, he

would find he could no longer call the tune there as he had done in the past.

- Maginnis talked about the desirability of an early statement from the British and Irish governments to the effect that they would be prepared to substitute any arrangement reached between the Northern Ireland parties for the Anglo-Irish Agreement. (On this point, Maginnis used language almost identical to that used by Alan Dukes in the Irish Times interview of the previous day, although he said that he had not yet read this interview).
- It was unclear to what extent Maginnis envisaged additional elements - i.e. other than arrangements for a devolutionary structure in Northern Ireland - in any new document that might substitute for the Agreement. While accepting the need for building in some provision for a Belfast/Dublin relationship, he was not forthcoming about precisely how this relationship might be structured. (My clear impression, however, was that what he and Robinson have in mind is scarcely more than might be envisaged between any friendly neighbours - "living apart in peace and friendship" was a phrase to which he returned a couple of times).

Cross-Border Cooperation/International Fund

- Maginnis is very positive about cross-border cooperation on economic issues. He appears to be quite friendly with Jim Nicholson and has been working with him and a few others to develop ideas for cross-border projects which might attract EC funding; he is anxious to stay in close touch with us on this.
- He remains ambivalent about the International Fund because of its origins in the Agreement, but at the same time was extremely anxious to canvas support for two applications for

golf courses which have been submitted to the Fund - one in Fermanagh and one in Monaghan. I undertook to convey his arguments in support of these applications.

McGimpsey Case

- He is close to the McGimpsey Brothers and is awaiting the outcome of their appeal to the Supreme Court with great interest.

Future Contact

- It was clear that Maginnis would be quite happy to have contact with Dublin officials on a regular basis. He mentioned that he will be in Dublin for the Rugby International in early February and that this would be a good opportunity for a further meeting.

Anne Anderson

Anne Anderson

8 January, 1990.

cc: PST, PSM, Mr. Nally, PSS, Mr. Gallagher, Joint Secretary,
Mr. Mathews, Mr. Brosnan, Dr. Mansergh, Counsellors A-I,
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