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Discussion with John Hume, 21st January, 1990

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Meeting with Secretary of State

- 1. Hume, Mallon, McGrady and Hendron met the Secretary of State in London on last Friday, at the latter's invitation, for a discussion which lasted almost two hours. The meeting concentrated in large part on the Secretary of State's recent Bangor speech, but also touched on issues such as Stalker-Sampson and the general situation in West Belfast.
- 2. Hume took the line at the meeting that the Secretary of State, through focussing exclusively on the organisation of a round-table conference between London and the Northern parties, was in danger of making the same mistake as his predecessors. The SDLP would of course come to such a Conference but, as in the past, no progress would be possible unless the Unionists first worked out their relationship with Dublin. The issue was not about handing back power to the North nor as the NIO seemed to believe about trying to find a classical compromise between the stated positions of the two sides; rather was the requirement to work out an understanding between the three sets of relationships on these islands.
- 3. Hume went on to say that, if the SDLP came out in the morning in favour of <u>devolution</u>, without taking account of the other relationships, a sizeable percentage of their supporters would feel that they had "sold out" in advance of negotiations.
- 4. In response to Hume's line on the need for the Unionists to work out their relationship with Dublin, the Secretary of

State asked what was in it for him (Brooke) if Hume's approach was followed. He went on to ask about the SDLP's agenda for talks and, when Hume in response referred again to the interdependence of the three relationships, Brooke asked that the Party elaborate on their thinking in writing. Hume agreed to do this, and will work on a text in close consultation with us.

Redeployment of Secretariat Staff

5. Hume made it clear to the Secretary of State that the SDLP were firmly opposed to <u>suspension</u> of the Agreement and considered the <u>Secretariat</u> to be sacrosanct. Hume's concern about the Secretariat was heightened on Saturday evening when Frank Millar told him on the phone that some Unionist MPs were saying that the British had indicated they were prepared to redeploy staff. (The question of redeployment of Secretariat staff was not, of course, referred to in the Bangor speech).

Nicholson/Allen Interview

6. Hume is deeply sceptical of the <u>Sunday Press</u> interview given by Jim Nicholson and Jack Allen. He is in particular worried that Nicholson and Allen may be seeking <u>by stealth</u> to undermine the Agreement. He firmly believes that Paisley and Molyneaux are not interested in a new comprehensive settlement and are committed only to the negative objective of undermining the Agreement. Paisley, in Hume's view, is in favour of a return to local autonomy on the Stormont model while Molyneaux's interest lies in the extension of the powers of Local Authorities and the greater integration of the North into the UK through, for instance, the establishment of an Ulster Grand Committee at Westminster. He is therefore particularly concerned that any response to the interview should be cautiously and carefully phrased and

should not in any way be open to misinterpretation about our commitment to the Agreement.

Dermot Gallagher, 22 January, 1990.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Mathews; Mr. Brosnan; Counsellors A-I