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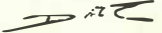
Telephone Call from Jim Nicholson, 23 January, 1990

Jim Nicholson telephoned from Brussels yesterday afternoon. He said he would wish to keep in touch with us on a continuing basis and would in particular like to get together for a further private conversation at an early date.

Nicholson said he was very disappointed with Paisley's reaction to the Taoiseach's statement. However, Paisley was not a "normal politician" and his reaction had to be seen in that light. (The Irish News yesterday, referring to Paisley's reaction, said it was impossible for him "to resist a lifetime's temptation to ravage those tainted by the brush of compromise"). Additionally, Nicholson thought that Paisley, given that they were both MEPs, might be trying, through his criticism of the weekend exchanges, to undermine Nicholson's position by what the latter described as "pulling a political stroke over me". Paisley always put the "interest of himself before that of his country" (sic!).

Nicholson went on to say that Unionist thinking is in something of a ferment at the moment and it would take a little time for it to be worked out. His own view was that, now that the possibility of an alternative to the Agreement had been accepted, Unionists need not be as "stringent" in pursuit of their other two preconditions for talks (suspension and Secretariat staff redeployment). A possible next step might be for Unionists to sit down bilaterally with the Secretary of State and agree a framework for talks. However, he repeated that they had still to think through their position; they had not yet decided, for instance, whether relationships within the North should be worked out in advance of those between North and South.

Finally, Nicholson said that Molyneaux, who had been very supportive of him over the past week (though Nicholson had no illusions about his leader's "slipperiness"), had asked him to try and discover what the Taoiseach would "really like" from Unionists at this stage. If they knew what he "basically wanted" (Nicholson thought, for instance, that it might be simultaneous talks on the interdependence of the three relationships) they could address their minds to the issue; and if they were to find the Taoiseach's approach acceptable, they could give consideration to a series of speeches which might make it easier to go in that direction.

  
Dermot Gallagher,  
24 January, 1990.

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