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Points from discussions at BIA with Reg Empey and Chris McGimpsey of UUP - 6/8 September 1991

Both Empey and McGimpsey expect some preliminary contacts relatively soon about the resumption of talks. Neither was very pressing about this and both are very conscious of the looming shadow of a British election. They felt that an idea which Peter Brooke might well take up, would be to meet as a first stage with the four party leaders in Northern Ireland. It would be preferable to explore what are the possibilities for progress first in this way rather than beginning in the more unwieldy framework of full delegations.

They feel that some useful lessons have been learned from the earlier phase of talks. One is that "perhaps we have been looking through the wrong end of the telescope" - it might be better to begin any new discussions with Strand 3 and perhaps Strand 2 in order to set a context for Strand 1. They are now very clear on the linkage between the three strands. They both stressed that the Unionists are not at all hesitant at this stage about getting down to Strand 2 - since they know that what they want to achieve will have to be achieved there.

McGimpsey in particular argued strongly that Molyneux had never been reluctant to get to Strand 2 - though media and other sources had been suggesting that this was the case. He fully understood that the Irish Government had been distrustful of Unionist intentions believing that Molyneux had had no intention of getting down to Strand 2. He also fully appreciated that our concerns about a venue - it would have been, as he said, politically impossible for the Taoiseach to "do a deal" in London.

McGimpsey also claimed that Molyneux has already explicitly accepted devolution. It was wrong to assume that there would be a split on this point between Paisley and Molyneux. Molyneux had in fact handled Paisley very well throughout - keeping him on a fairly tight rein in private but allowing him publicly to take a dominating role at times where this seemed necessary.

ND  
9 September 1991

*Note: I also spoke at some length to Empey and McGimpsey. Reg Empey also said Willie McCrea was the principal DUP influence on Paisley and the likely successor. Paisley had exploited the Mountbatten incident to reassert control over Robinson, and this still showed. Empey sanctioned the idea, also mooted by ~~Robinson~~ Molyneux, of making the AIA an "last-Word" mechanism. I told him I did not consider this a very promising option. Otherwise the conversation covered much the same points as the above.*