



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/93/34
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

CONFIDENTIAL

Discussion with John Hume on round-table talks process.

2 April, 1991

1. I spoke to John Hume at length on Tuesday last on the round-table talks process. It is clear that he is just beginning to give serious thought to the SDLP position. In this regard, he emphasised the critical importance of the Government and the SDLP having a shared strategy which would, as far as possible, be worked out in advance. The SDLP is having its first substantive meeting on the talks in Belfast on Saturday and Hume would hope that this could be followed up very quickly with a meeting with the Taoiseach and colleagues.

SDLP Delegation for talks

2. Hume envisages the party being represented at the talks by Mallon, McGrady, Hendron and himself; the alternates would be Denis Haughey, Seán Farren, Bríd Rogers and Tommy Gallagher (their prospective candidate in Fermanagh/South Tyrone).

Tactics

3. Hume feels that the SDLP's opening tactic should be to place an appropriately re-written version of Chapter 5 of the Forum Report ("Framework for a New Ireland: Present Realities and Future Requirements") on the table and ask the Unionists if they agreed with this analysis. This he believed would open the way to a dialogue about the nature of the problem, a dialogue which the Unionists have always tried to avoid up to now.

4. Hume is also considering whether (and, if so, at what stage) the party should propose either (i) a Federal solution (perhaps with local majority rule in the North) or (ii) Joint Sovereignty, along the lines of a document the party published in 1972.

Internal Northern dimension

5. Hume's main worry at present relates to the internal talks and, in particular, what type of structures for the North the SDLP should either propose (at the appropriate time), or be prepared to accept at these talks. He is tentatively inclined to reject the (traditional) approach of a Six County Assembly and to see merit instead in a structure which might be based on Four Regional Councils - he believes that if the boundaries for these Councils were drawn on a "sympathetic" basis, the SDLP could control two of them. The four Regional Councils might in turn be responsible to an overall (three person) Body (if any more than three, the SDLP tend to lose out), which might either be nominated by the three Northern MEPs or elected on the same basis as they are.
6. Hume has given very little thought to the powers of the overall Body, except to envisage its three members and Dublin Ministers forming a Joint Council of Ministers with all-island responsibility in areas such as tourism, energy, etc. The Joint Council of Ministers would also have its own Secretariat.

Security

7. Hume is also giving some thought to the feasibility of separating civil from security policing in the North. This would mean in practice the establishment of a number of

regional civil police forces in the Six Counties. Responsibility for security policing (which might he believes, depending on the ultimate overall package, be envisaged on a unified North-South or trans-border basis), would lie with the Joint Council of Ministers. Hume believes that the Unionists, while being deeply concerned about the implications of such a proposal, and in particular the directly intrusive role it would give to Dublin, would find it difficult to resist it, in particular as the British would be very likely to see considerable merit in the idea.

DAG

Dermot Gallagher,
5 April, 1991.

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; Ambassador London; Mr. Brosnan;
Joint Secretary; Mr. Dalton; Counsellors A-I