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*Taoiseach
To me pl.
[Signature]*

CONFIDENTIAL

*cc Mr Murray ✓
Mr Corkery ✓*

Conversation with Sir Patrick Mayhew

Hillsborough -- 20 November, 1995

COPY TO	
JE	POT
21	PSS
✓	MR. F. MURRAY
	MR. P. TEAHON
✓	MR. S. DONLON
	MR. T. DALTON

[Circular stamp: STAFF ROOM]

1. After a dinner which he hosted in Hillsborough for the International Fund for Ireland last night, Sir Patrick Mayhew took me aside for about half an hour to discuss the present situation.
2. At his request I outlined the position as I saw it: We found the British text an advance and were willing to work on it. We were seeking, with some success, to bring the nationalist parties into a positive frame of mind. However, there were major difficulties which had to be addressed: I listed these, placing particular emphasis on Washington Three.
3. I said the substantive problem on Washington Three which had led to the postponement of the September Summit remained unabated. It was in fact compounded by a second difficulty: Particularly because of the briefing which occurred in September, the Taoiseach would have to explain clearly to the public why the new package was acceptable and the September one was not. That required a new position all round on Washington Three, among other things.
4. The Secretary of State rehearsed the familiar British points on Washington Three. He added that it was not his idea, but had been dictated to him by the Cabinet. There would be major difficulties in the Tory party if there was movement on it.
5. I said we appreciated fully the importance of the issue for the British, just as

we had come to accept the impossibility of it for Sinn Fein. Opposition to Adams within Sinn Fein was now beginning to surface publicly for the first time. The product of these two deeply-held positions would be a protracted stalemate, which everyone agreed was the worst possible conditions for sustaining the peace. If the peace broke down on Washington Three, the Irish public, who wanted decommissioning to complement the ceasefire, not as an alternative goal to it, might be severe in their judgement on any Irish Government which was aligned with the British in that strategy.

6. Sir Patrick accepted there was a difference of substance between the Governments on this. He canvassed other "selling points" which the Taoiseach might use. For example, could he not point to the much improved language?
7. I said this and the other ancillary factors would be a help. However there was no avoiding the central importance of Washington Three in the present impasse. The proposed international body would be cumbersome and very expensive - too expensive to be the price of merely a few week's deferral of the present impasse, which is all that was on offer if there was a fixed British position on Washington Three. We wanted to transcend the impasse.
8. Sir Patrick threw out the possibility that Trimble might be of assistance in this area. (He demurred from my suggestion that Trimble had resiled somewhat from an apparent earlier flexibility on this point). Sir Patrick disclaimed any British alignment with the elected body proposal, but it was very clear from his language that it was central to his view of the way forward. I repeated the Taoiseach's position on the value of a constructive discussion of it, but underlined the vehement opposition we had met on the part of the nationalist parties in the North.

9. Sir Patrick chatted generally about Trimble, whom he admitted he disliked heartily. However, he suggested, and I agreed that it was helpful that the unionists had a "champion" who could be seen to do battle for them on television etc. I pointed out however, that the challenge of the twin-track would be much greater for the Republicans, if, as we hoped, it involved serious movement on weapons. For Trimble, the risk was merely receiving an invitation to "talks about talks", which he might or might not wish to avail of.
10. I added that within our system we had been surprised by the recriminations about the Taoiseach's London speech, in particular as regards sensitivity towards unionists. There was no figure in Irish politics who had ever done more in this respect. The key message of the Taoiseach's London speech was that sensitivity was required towards both traditions. We very much hoped the two Governments would continue in that vein.



Sean Ó hUiginn

21 November 1995