

MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND AN SDLP DEPUTATION
HELD ON 4 JUNE

<u>Present:</u>	Secretary of State	Mr Hume
	Mr Scott	Mr Mallon
	PUS	Mr McGrady
	Mr McConnell	Dr Hendron
	Mr Daniell	

1. The Secretary of State opened by explaining his position on the Assembly. He had invited the leaders of the parties which had taken their seats to discuss the position of the current Assembly, not Assemblies per se. Mr Hume said it was a disgrace that Assemblymen should behave as they were in the Chamber and still receive salaries and expenses. The SDLP wanted to talk to unionists about devolution and, if agreement were reached, would stand in Assembly elections and participate in its business. If prior agreement could not be achieved in a way that could be put to the electorate, it would be pointless to think in terms of another Assembly. In such circumstances the unionists would fight elections on the basis of "no power sharing". The Secretary of State cast doubt on whether it was realistic to expect full agreement in advance.

2. The Secretary of State said that all sides needed to enter talks without preconditions. There had been two false starts on talks between HMG and unionist leaders, because they could not carry their parties with them; some unionist party members opposed talks because they wanted confrontation but others were genuinely concerned at the prospect that discussions might collapse. The prevailing mood amongst reasonable people was now in favour of talks and the churches had thrown their weight behind the need for dialogue; it was vital that the SDLP should

do all in its power to encourage the Unionists to open discussion. The SDLP were open to criticism that they were making no efforts in this respect, yet were reaping the benefits from the Agreement.

3. Mr Hume said that he did not know what more the SDLP could do on talks. They would talk without preconditions and discuss their view of the future with the unionists. The Secretary of State asked why Mr Hume had not responded to Mr West's letter calling for talks with the "chartist" group. Mr Hume said that they had written seeking talks saying that they had the authority of Mr Molyneaux. He had replied to the effect that he was available to talk to Mr Molyneaux but had subsequently discovered that the Official Unionist leader disowned the chartists. He agreed with the Secretary of State's suggestion that he might write publicly to Messrs Molyneaux and Paisley suggesting that they meet.

4. Mr Hume said that there was now a positive dynamic in Northern Ireland politics. Unionism had never been political in that traditionally it was concerned only with maintaining sectarian solidarity and threatening HMG. That meant that anyone within the unionist ranks with a more positive approach (Brian Faulkner, Terence O'Neill etc) was ditched. Such an attitude helped give birth to the original IRA and contributed to its resurgence after 1974 in that it caused people to have no faith in democracy. Now however the unionists were being forced to debate their relationship with others.

5. Mr McGrady said that the unionists had appeared to impede progress through the Anglo-Irish Agreement by their protests. In order to attract them to the negotiating table it was essential to deliver something to the nationalist community in order to show that the policy was progressing despite unionist activity. Mr Hume said that the Hillsborough communiqué referred to certain matters that would be addressed immediately - for example the administration

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of justice, a police code of conduct, flags and emblems; yet while officials might be talking on these subjects, nothing concrete appeared to be happening. Mr Mallon said that while the Agreement had initially been welcomed in the nationalist community, there was increasingly an attitude of suspended judgement; people were becoming impatient and it would be dangerous if nothing could be shown to have been achieved.

6. The Secretary of State said it was inevitable that there should be some impatience in view of the expectations that had been built up when the Agreement was signed. Some of the areas involved were complex and discussions would take time to yield results. Dialogue was taking place between representatives of the two governments in a constructive spirit and, for example, there was now a better perception by both sides of each other's position on Diplock Courts. There were grounds for hope that there would be developments over the summer, although not necessarily in the areas which the SDLP had focussed on.

7. Mr Mallon said that progress on 'I' voters would be a simple matter and would benefit unionists in border areas as well as nationalists (I understand that Mr Chesterton has a submission in preparation on this). He also referred to the desire of nationalists in some areas to use Irish place names in the addresses given on their driving licences; there was a particular problem in relation to the residents of Blackwatertown where DOE were not permitting use of the Irish names. (Mr Spence for advice please). Speedy progress in the whole area of place names would undermine Sinn Fein's activities in this area.

8. On three judge courts, Mr Hume, while making it clear that he was not criticising the quality and even-handedness of the judiciary said that in introducing Diplock Courts we had removed the protection afforded by the jury and put nothing in its place. Given that judges had taken over the role of the jury it was commonsense that three minds addressing the issue of guilt were safer than one. Progress on the administration of

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justice would seriously undermine Sinn Fein, as had already happened as a result of the early release of young people from prison. The important factor was not legal niceties but rather the protection of the individual and being seen to afford such protection. Mr Scott said that the Conference had a sub-group looking into these matters. The Secretary of State said that the points made about progress flowing from the Agreement were well taken and had been put very effectively by the deputation.

9. Mr Hume argued the case for PR for Northern Ireland in Westminster elections. Every other election in the Province was conducted in this way, so why not the most important? Sinn Fein had been kept alive in Westminster elections, because of the split in the vote and the first past the post system encouraged deals between parties which would sometimes be better not made. If there was a desire to retain single MP constituencies, then the Alternative Vote system could be adopted. Mr Kinnock had responded favourably to this idea.

10. Mr Mallon complained that the electoral arrangements in Northern Ireland were a "disgrace". His nearest electoral office was in Banbridge which meant a long journey to get to counts and the risk of being assaulted while he was there. One returning officer for three rural constituencies was not satisfactory. Also it was a nonsense that his polling stations should be located in the centre of Newry, thus discouraging rural voters. These factors, combined with the refusal of the electoral authorities to provide forms for ongoing registration, could cost the SDLP around 2,000 votes in elections. At Mr Scott's suggestion Mr Mallon said that he would submit a paper to the NIO on these issues. (In the meantime, I should be grateful for advice from Miss Elliott).

11. Mr Hume expressed concern about the criteria for withholding government grants to community groups which might have paramilitary links. In one case (he was clearly referring to the Ward case) the people concerned had already put a great deal of

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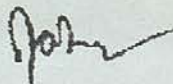
cash into a scheme and the withdrawal of support from LEDU for security reasons had caused deep distress. Mr Hume did not believe that there were any paramilitary links and in fact the man concerned had been interned by mistake. Also the concept of extending the "Hurd policy" to individuals starting up business was a dangerous one. Mr McGrady said that what was involved was a pure business transaction and that if it was not satisfactorily resolved the people concerned would probably go public. The Secretary of State said that there was a legal point still to be resolved in this case and that he could not comment further until that was resolved. However the formula set out by Douglas Hurd on 27 June 1985 still stood in relation to community groups. Mr Hume said that in pursuing this policy the Secretary of State was laying himself open to being sued for defamation. Referring to the Dove House case, Mr Hume noted that there was a priest on the Board Management; the funds concerned would not be used for paramilitary purposes even though one of the managers was associated with Sinn Fein. There would be a lobby of MPs on this issue. A way around this difficult problem might be to give Enterprise Ulster the responsibility of running programmes that currently came under the ACE umbrella, thus taking control away from community groups over which in some cases there might be doubts. The Secretary of State replied that this would be over-bureaucratic and would remove from ACE the important element of community commitment. (After the meeting the Secretary of State asked Mr Scott to look again at the Ward case, especially in the light of the fact that the man concerned had sunk a considerable amount of his own cash in the scheme - PS/Mr Scott to note and take forward).

12. Mr Mallon said that the Army had encamped on a hill at Drummuckavall outside Crossmaglen, some 200 soldiers being involved. They were digging bunkers and had pulled fences down and their activities had rendered some 350 acres useless for farming purposes. Cattle were roaming all over the place yet there had been no help, no compensation, and the CIVREP was saying that nothing could be done until the

Army had left. Mr Mallon had met 25 local residents on site and had attempted to discuss the matter with the Army who had referred him to the police. On a related point, it would be a serious mistake to move CIVREPs into Army barracks. The Secretary of State said that he would look into these points (Mr Blackwell to advise please).

13. Mr Hume and Dr Hendron mentioned worries about social security reforms. The introduction of the social fund would have an adverse effect on many deprived people in the Catholic community, especially in West Belfast and the Foyle area. Also the measure to extend the period without unemployment benefit for those who left work of their own volition would have a serious impact on those who were forced out of jobs by intimidation but did not feel able to admit to the fact. These matters would be raised at a meeting the next day with Tony Newton and Richard Needham. (PS/Mr Needham to report on the outcome of that meeting and to arrange for advice on whether there is anything that the Secretary of State might usefully say in a letter to Mr Hume).

14. The tone of the meeting was friendly and constructive.



J A DANIELL
Private Secretary

5 June 1986

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