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FROM: PS/Secretary of State
10 June 1991

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Minister of State (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B
Mr Pilling - B
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Cooke - B
Mr McNeill - B
Mr Pope - B

18/6

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a m [signature]

Mr D J R Hill - B

MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR HUME: 5 JUNE 1991

At the Secretary of State's request, Mr Hume came to see the Secretary of State in Parliament Buildings at 3.40pm on Wednesday 5 June. Dr Mawhinney, Mr Pilling and myself were also present.

2. Mr Hume said that he had just returned from a funeral. He could not understand the difficulties to which Dr Paisley had referred. By raising the "Dublin bogeyman", he might be getting ready to get out. The Secretary of State said that he thought Dr Paisley's reference to "road blocks" was a "Carson's statue" type of event, and there was no substance to it.

3. The Secretary of State asked whether the SDLP were content with the procedural guidelines that had been given to Mr Hume earlier in the day. Mr Hume confirmed that they were.

4. The Secretary of State said that all the outstanding matters except the Chairman had been settled: the agenda and work plan, the venue, staffing for the Chairman, and procedural guidelines. Although the process had been torturous, and there had been times of "radio silence from Dublin" all had now been achieved. On the Chairmanship, whatever views one took of the 23 names that the Unionists had put forward, some were proper runners. Mr Hume replied that he had not seen the names. The Secretary of State said

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that he had asked the two parties to circulate them. Mr Hume said he regarded the matter of the Chairmanship as being for the two governments to decide.

5. The Secretary of State said that Mr McNeill had reported to him that Mr Hume had suggested that plenaries should start on the Monday after the following week [17 June]. Mr Hume said that he had no doubt that a Chairman would be found within the 10 days available. He also thought it would be good for the process to have a short gap as the talks were publicly "in tatters", with a perception of a lack of seriousness. A 10-day gap would allow the two governments to obtain a Chairman, consult the parties and reach agreement. The Secretary of State observed that this was a high risk strategy as there was no guarantee that someone who was both able and willing to take on the task would be found in that time-scale. Mr Hume replied that a deadline should help. The Secretary of State pointed out that at his meeting ^{with} ~~want~~ Mr Collins the previous Friday, Mr Collins had had to be pressed to agree to the names being put forward by DUP being discussed the following Friday, whereas Mr Hume and himself would know whether the names were good prospects within a day. Both the SDLP and the Irish government had said that they did not want plenaries to begin until the outstanding matters had been settled, but if too relaxed an approach were adopted, this would put the governments on the defensive in public. Mr Hume responded that the deadline would put the Irish government under pressure.

6. The Secretary of State then asked what the position would be if a Chairman had not been agreed by the end of the 10-day gap. Mr Hume said that he had not suggested names to anybody as yet. He recognised that it would become more difficult as names leaked out. Two that occurred to him were Piet Dankert and Dennis Healey. But it was important that the two governments decided these matters, and that their authority was not undermined. The Secretary of State said that progress was being made on the Chairman. Mr Hume was free to feed or not feed names to himself and the Irish government, as he wished. There was no need to make these names public. Mr Hume then said that he had mentioned Piet Dankert to the Irish Government, but

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there had not been a positive response. The Secretary of State stressed that there were likely to be very few acceptable candidates who were appropriate for the role of Chairman. Proposing names was therefore a constructive contribution. Mr Hume then reported that Alf Morris MP had phoned him to offer his services.

7. The Secretary of State asked whether Mr Hume could contemplate meeting the following week in plenary session. He was concerned that a pause might lead to a further round of vituperation. Mr Hume disagreed. It would be possible to list all the things that had been agreed and to announce a firm date for the start of serious business in Strand 1. To do so would strengthen the process. The Secretary of State said that he would wish there to be general support for Mr Hume's proposal. The disadvantage was that, despite the deadline, it was possible that no agreement would have been reached on the Chairman. Mr Hume responded that at that stage there was almost certain to be a name identified that would be acceptable to everyone. The only problem would be if the person did not wish to take on the task. But in this case the "problem" would have been solved. The Secretary of State asked whether, if a Chairman had been agreed over the weekend, Mr Hume would still want to wait until the following Monday before beginning plenary sessions. Mr Hume replied that although he thought a pause would be a good thing, he would not wish to push for a pause in these circumstances.

8. Dr Mawhinney pointed out that Mr Hume's proposal was effectively an ultimatum to put pressure on HMG to accept someone, whether they were ideal for the task or not. It was also an ultimatum to the Irish government. Mr Collins was unlikely to welcome such a move. While Mr Hume had taken the view that his retiring temporarily had concentrated the minds of others and been helpful, the SDLP was not under pressure at present. However, his suggestion would put his party under more pressure. In addition, his concern, and it was a genuine difficulty, was that the Unionists might be interested only in Strand 1 and not in Strand 2. If plenaries were to start the following Monday, it should be possible to complete Strand 1 and be well into Strand 2 before the date of

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the next IGC. If plenaries started a week later, it was more probable that only Strand 1 would be completed in time. Mr Hume responded that he thought that the "straightjacket" of 10 weeks was damaging. It increased the sense of abnormality. This problem had to be recognised. There was no reason why the IGC should not meet, and then talks continue until September. In general, the time pressure was not helpful, and it would be better to have "normal talks" instead.

9. The Secretary of State said that, if it were announced that plenaries would not start until 17 June, there would be questions from the Unionists and the media which would lead to a debate about the timetable. This was precisely what negotiations about the procedural guidelines had sought to avoid. Mr Hume said he still did not see why a date should not be fixed and work on the Chairman should continue in expectation that it would be settled by that date. He wondered whether the Unionists would agree to his proposition. The Secretary of State said that he did not know. Dr Mawhinney observed that the Unionists were "raring to go". If there were to be a pause for 10 days, their reactions could be very damaging and bring the SDLP into centre stage. Mr Hume replied that he was not worried about pressure. Dr Mawhinney commented that the process itself might be harmed. Moreover, what would happen if no Chairman had been agreed by 17 June? Mr Hume replied that it would be quite clear by then that no one was standing in the way of the process. Dr Mawhinney questioned whether that qualification had not already been met. Was not that the situation at present? Mr Hume said that in practice he was only seeking a 3-day pause from Monday-Wednesday of the following week. Dr Mawhinney asked whether Mr Hume did not believe that the Unionists might "bail out" at the end of Strand 1. Mr Hume replied that he didn't believe anything. The Unionists were not united, and Dr Paisley seemed to be led by the views of the most extreme person in the room at the time - like the Provisionals. The Secretary of State commented that Dr Paisley's party appeared to be disciplined. Mr Hume responded that the DUP was not a party but an oligarchy. For example, there was no party constitution. He placed more hope on the "Peter Robinsons of this world".

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10. Mr Pilling asked how certain Mr Hume was that the governments could deliver a Chairman within 10 days. There were all sorts of practical issues that had to be resolved. Mr Hume responded that parties would be committed to "talking on that date regardless". The Secretary of State observed that that would remove the pressure totally. Mr Hume explained that it would be clear by then that a serious effort had been made to obtain a Chairman. The Secretary of State pointed to the issues that had already been resolved: the venue, the guidelines for the Chairman, the work plan and the staffing for the Chairman. Thus four out of five issues had been solved. The two governments were working purposively on the Chairman issue and the Unionists were engaged, as the production of 23 names showed, of whom three at any rate could Chair the meeting. Mr Hume responded that there was no-one acceptable on the list. The Secretary of State replied that he found that remark offensive to a former Governor-General of Australia. Mr Hume asked who this was. The Secretary of State replied that it was Sir Zelman Cowen. Mr Hume said he had not seen the list.

11. Dr Mawhinney emphasised that the point remained that the criterion that the Unionists were serious had been met. Mr Hume said that he had asked the Irish government what the situation was, and been told that the two governments were meeting that Friday. This was part of the reason for his proposal that plenaries should start on 17 June. Did the Secretary of State think that the Irish government had some underlying reason behind their position? The Secretary of State said that the previous Friday the Irish government had taken the view that a two-week pause would be good for all concerned. He had said that he did not think that this was right. There was a distinct risk that the Unionists would take the view that the SDLP was determined not to get into the talks. Mr Hume responded that he had done nothing which would justify that. The SDLP had not wanted lengthy arguments over the venue and so forth. The Secretary of State pointed out that the public perception might change if the SDLP insisted on a 10-day pause. Mr Hume explained that his choice of time was based on what would be necessary to obtain a chairman. In any event, a pause might not be a "bloody bad thing".

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12. The Secretary of State said that the difficult question was that, if all concerned were prepared to start on 17 June, why did they not start plenaries on the Monday before that?. He had had no intellectual difficulty with Mr Hume's original position of waiting for the Chairman to be appointed. But creating a new deadline and then not delivering to it would create a very difficult problem. Mr Hume asked whether the Secretary of State would prefer to wait until a Chairman had been appointed. The Secretary of State responded that he was interested in making progress as soon as possible. If any of the parties had wished to protract the discussion that had taken place on the issues that had been resolved so far, they could have done so. This had not happened. A position of waiting for the Chairman to be appointed represented a coherent response to the Unionist document of 21 May. But Mr Hume's current proposal was not one that he would wish to put to the other parties. It would therefore be sensible to have a meeting with the other party leaders at which Mr Hume could put his proposition. He would want Mr Hume to be exposed to their views, and he would no doubt be pressed on what would happen if no Chairman were to have been agreed by 17 June.

13. Mr Hume said that he had no difficulty with his position, but because the proposition was coming from himself, this might make it less acceptable to others than if the Secretary of State made the proposal. The Secretary of State said that he remained unconvinced. It might be that Mr Hume could be more persuasive to the other parties, and, of course, if they were to agree to his proposition, there would be no external difficulties.

14. Dr Mawhinney pressed Mr Hume as to whether he ruled out starting plenaries on the Monday following the meeting, on the basis that, although the issue of Chairman was unresolved, he was satisfied that it was being addressed seriously by all parties. Mr Hume replied that he had not seen any of the 23 names. Dr Mawhinney asked whether Mr Hume needed to see them if the two governments told him that they were seriously considering the names. Mr Hume responded that it depended on whether the two

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governments told him that there was not a problem. The Secretary of State pointed out that that required the two governments to reach agreement, whereas Mr Hume's concern had been that the Unionists would not agree to a name. Now he appeared to be looking towards the governments, one of which was outside his control, and on which it had taken over three weeks to agree on a single name. Mr Hume said that at the forthcoming meeting on Friday the two governments would surely agree on some names to approach, but the Irish government had not kept him fully informed. The Secretary of State said that much depended on the speed at which the Irish government decided on names. Mr Hume commented that the Irish government had been "shocked" by the refusal of the Unionists to accept Lord Carrington. The Secretary of State observed that journalists had been consistently reporting that Unionists could not have been expected to accept Lord Carrington.

15. The Secretary of State suggested that Mr Hume meet with Unionist leaders and Dr Alderdice to put his proposal to them. His own view was that while he respected Mr Hume's original position, the revised version was not coherent. Mr Hume said he was trying to be helpful, but would be prepared to remain with his original position. However, he remained unclear as to what was wrong with his proposition. The Secretary of State said that he could not have total confidence that a Chairman would be found, and a "pseudo-deadline" would be extremely dangerous. He had no respect at all for the way in which the Unionists had negotiated: they had had to "eat their words in a most spectacular way". If Mr Hume was generous in the current situation, there would be a degree of pressure for Strand 2. He would also make it clear to all concerned that there had been generosity on the part of the SDLP. Mr Hume asked whether this meant starting plenaries without a Chairman. The Secretary of State confirmed that this would be the case, but the two governments were of course meeting on Friday.

16. After a period of silence, Mr Hume said that he had not expected the meeting to be about this topic. There was then more silence.

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17. The Secretary of State asked whether Mr Hume would prefer to see the Unionist leaders face to face without him being present. Mr Hume agreed to this, and the meeting ended at 5.10 pm.

AFTERNOTES

18. Mr Hume remained in the Secretary of State's office, and was joined at 5.20pm by Mr Molyneaux and Dr Paisley. Within five minutes, it had been agreed that plenaries would begin on Monday 17 June on the basis that the parties were confident that a Chairman would have been agreed by then.

19. Dr Alderdice joined the leaders of the other parties just before 5.30 pm. Mr Molyneaux left almost immediately to go to the airport. Dr Alderdice agreed with what had been proposed. The Secretary of State re-joined the leaders and asked them what they would say if they were asked whether they would meet anyway on 17 June. Dr Paisley replied that they would stand on the comment that they were confident that a Chairman would be settled by then. He went on to say "John here has a problem on which we need to help him with".

20. A short statement by the leaders of the NI parties was then prepared by them, which was subsequently read to the Press.

Signed

A J D PAWSON
Private Secretary

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