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4/3

FROM: D J R HILL
Talks Secretariat
20 June 1991

21 JUN 1991

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cc PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Pilling
Mr Thomas
Mr Alston
Mr McNeill
Mr Dodds
~~Mr Boston~~
Mr Lavery
Mr Masefield
Mr Brooker
Mr Townson
Mr Pope



Alston
Please p/a with other
papers on "Talks" Staff
issues. Maybe with R
Thompson or Miss Johnson

MR CHESTERTON

INDEPENDENT CHAIRMAN: STAFF SUPPORT

1. Further to my minute of 5 June I can now tell you that:

- a. we are hoping the Australian Government will be able to provide a Private Secretary for Sir Ninian Stephen. The costs of this appointment will fall to the two Governments (each paying half the cost to the Australian Government, thus helping to save on DRCs);
- b. we are enquiring whether Sir Ninian would want to have an Australian Personal Secretary (conceivably from the High Commission here) or would prefer us to appoint someone with "local knowledge". In either case the cost would be shared with the Irish Government;
- c. we are planning to nominate a note-taker (Mr Pope) to join an independent dedicated note-taking team reporting to the Chairman. This will also require us to provide the necessary typing support. [I should point out that this assumes a "note-taking team" of only two people, but our experience suggests that this should just be manageable if the timetable for strand two is roughly the same as the present timetable for strand one - two long plenary sessions, with coffee/tea breaks, each day. If strand two breaks down into parallel groups, or there is a sequence

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CPLHILL/5452/MD

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of short bilaterals, or the Talks extend into evening sessions for more than the occasional day, it may be necessary to expand the note-taking team to four. In that case we would need to consider seconding someone from the Political Development Team, or possibly - if Mr McNeill would be content - from PAB, or finding an extra body with the appropriate skills.]

Practical consequences

2. Mr Townson is making the necessary accommodation plans and will be acquiring the necessary furniture and office equipment.

Mr Taylor (ISU) has been asked to provide a suitable WP system to support the note-taking team and the Chairman's personal secretary.

3. On the basis of our experience to date, the note-taking team will need to be supported by at least one typist (who will also need to take on the photocopying and other clerical duties), with the Chairman's personal secretary expected to take some of the strain. We should be able to share the cost with the Irish Government and it may be that they would be able to provide an individual to fill the post. However, we may need to find a typist to support the note-takers ourselves.

4. On the "worst case" assumption that we need to provide a personal secretary and a typist ourselves, I will consider further the proposal in paragraph 4 of my earlier minute regarding the personal secretary post. As regards the typist post I would be nervous about simply redeploying a whole unit from the existing Talks Secretariat typing pool until I have had an opportunity to establish whether the loss of responsibility for doing summary minutes results in any significant diminution of the very heavy workload on the pool.

5. There are obvious sensitivities about any appointments to these posts. Some of the delegations might be concerned about confidentiality if it emerged that one of "the Government's" typists was acting as PS to the Chairman or doing the minutes of all the Chairman's meetings, which could of course include bilaterals not involving the Government. This may also rule out the appointment of

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a typist provided by the Irish Government. It may therefore, in all the circumstances, be sensible to look for "new faces" and preferably from outside the NIO. I have discussed this with Mr Fell who has kindly agreed, without commitment, to establish whether any of the Northern Ireland Departments could identify individuals with the necessary skills who could be seconded to the Talks to service the Chairman and his support team. I should be grateful if Mr Laverty would consider the mechanics of this and let me have advice if necessary.

6. As regards accommodation, I am assuming that the Private Secretary and any Australian personal secretary would be accommodated with Sir Ninian and Lady Stephen, at Hillsborough.

7. I will be briefing Mr Pilling to discuss any practical implications for the Irish Government at his next liaison meeting with Irish officials.

8. I have already asked Mr Coston to create a separate cost centre in respect of the independent Chairman and I should be grateful if those concerned could ensure that costs arising from the points mentioned above are identified as such so that they can be properly categorised.

Signed: David Hill

D J R HILL
Talks Secretariat
20 June 1991