

POINTS TO MAKE

Text

- Glad that the drafting work since our meeting on 3 December has proceeded so well. There are a few outstanding points we should settle today. [See separate note on the text.]

Next meeting

- Can we also confirm that we envisage making the Joint Declaration in London on [Tuesday 14 December] at a joint press conference, and that we will both be making statements to our respective Parliaments the following day?
- Suggest that our officials should co-ordinate closely on Monday to clear the ground.

Press line

- Hope we can dampen down expectations of our meeting today. I am concerned that we should not stoke up fears in Northern Ireland about the progress which is being made. We do not want to be blown off course now. I suggest we say:

"The Prime Minister and Taoiseach had a useful discussion. They reviewed the on-going work which officials were commissioned to do at their meeting in Dublin last week. There is more to be done, though both sides believe progress is being made. The Prime Minister and Taoiseach plan to meet again before Christmas."

Irish Convention

- Would be a mistake if you were to announce either at our press conference or shortly thereafter. Would be seen as the price of a deal with the Provisionals which had been suppressed from the Joint Declaration itself. Would also increase unionists' suspicions, especially that the two Governments have abandoned the Talks process.
- Could we agree that you do not announce the Convention until after our Parliamentary Statements, unless it is clear (and announced?) by then that there is a cessation of violence?
- I believe, partly in the light of our exchanges with Jim Molyneaux, that matters would be improved further if the Convention was called a Forum. That idea has of course the merit of familiarity. [The New Ireland Forum, involving Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, Labour Party and SDLP reported in 1984.]

The public line I shall take about the Convention, whenever it is announced, is that it is entirely a matter for the Irish Government; that HMG has no role in relation to it; that you were courteous enough to give us advance notice of your intention to establish it; and that both Governments agree that it is no obstacle to the Talks process.

Select Committee

- As I think you know, I am going to need to make clear before Christmas that I will invite Parliament in the New Year to agree to establish a Northern Ireland Select Committee. Essential to have balancing gesture for Mr Molyneaux.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

- As you know, there is a good case on the merits for a Select Committee. It genuinely would not pre-empt the outcome of the Talks process: it has a purely scrutiny role. Existing Select Committees can already look at NI matters. We hope all NI parties, including the SDLP, will play a part in the Committee.
- Silly if John Hume carried through his threat to withdraw from the Talks on this issue.