

**Dermot Nally  
Papers**

**UCDA P254/61**

SECRET

MEETING WITH THE SDLP, SUNDAY, 14 NOVEMBER, 1993

The Taoiseach and the Tánaiste accompanied by Mr Seán O hUiginn of the Department of Foreign Affairs and the undersigned met an SDLP delegation led by Mr John Hume, and consisting of the other three MPs Seamus Mallon, Dr Joe Hendron and Mr Eddie McGrady.

John Hume, having been invited to express his views on the current situation, asked what exactly had come from the British on the June document. He wanted to know if it was true that neither Government had accepted it. At his meeting with Major, he had stuck to the June document, which restated principles set out by Brooke and Mayhew. Self-determination was simply whatever agreement could be reached. The British Government were asked to promote agreement. He offered to provide any available clarification or rewording.

The Taoiseach explained that he had gone to Major on the understanding there could be some flexibility on wording. There were certain things that the British simply would not buy. While no text had been agreed, work on the text was more or less finished, when the process came to a dramatic stop. He had not given the Hume/Adams report to Major. He went to Brussels to restore the process.

However, when a negative answer came back from British officials last Wednesday, he sent Major a very sharp letter. A letter came back from Major, saying the door was not closed.

The Tánaiste made the point that Adams was anathema, and that the British feared a Unionist backlash. The British considered the text even now to be too green.

Hume said he never seen such a strong response on the ground. He had positive messages from Chilcot.

The Taoiseach speculated that Major was a prisoner, and that the initiative which had been 100% dead was still 90-95% dead. The Adams tag was the problem. Possibly, the Unionists did not want peace. The peace process and the talks process were not in competition.

The Tánaiste said Hurd does not particularly like the Unionists, but had never gone further than keep a close interest with what was going on. Molyneux had access to the PM whenever he wanted.

The Taoiseach said the purpose of the Convention was to ... <sup>Sanifza</sup> SF, and while it looked pan-Nationalist there wasn't a better idea. Hume suggested on the other hand SF could be admitted to talks by 1 February.

McGrady pointed out that Ministers continually spoke now of the Conservative and Unionist Party.

Hume pointed out they were asking for less than British Labour Party policy. Mayhew was a West Cork Unionist, who would like to think he understands, but did not want to let down Unionists.

The Taoiseach said the British would probably never slam the door. Their main interest was to push the talks process.

McGrady said the Government were vulnerable to the accusation of putting party advantage before the peace process, when they could be changing the course of history.

The Taoiseach referred to a weakness in the June text even admitted by Adams, from what he had heard. They had sought to flesh out what the British would agree, so that they could hopefully balance the two positions. The June document was very unbalanced between the two communities.

Hume accepted that if the impression got round that the politicians were not interested this would be a fairly potent instrument in the hands of Sinn Féin.

Mallon said what the British had as a policy was keeping the Unionists on side, the status quo, the talks, and a war they could not win. Mallon raised the question of whether the British could be shown up.

If the British said no, did Nationalist Ireland have to walk away their tails between their legs? They should not threaten to do something, but just do it. Hume said the Irish could still go ahead with the Convention, and take on the task of persuading the British and the Unionists. The Taoiseach accepted this had always been a possibility. Hume said there was a generational factor. The current IRA leadership did not want their kids to get involved.

The Tánaiste said Nationalism had been tainted by the Provos. More persistent violence in the 1970s had failed to budge the British and the Unionists.

Hume said the Unionists wanted power not agreement, and the Taoiseach agreed with him that the Orange card was being played again. Mallon said British could not be blamed for baulking, if we baulked ourselves.

The Tánaiste said the amount of publicity Adams was receiving was not helping, and he warned about not underestimating the Loyalists.

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15 November 1993