

NOTE FROM MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE - 10.1.92

Venue: Video-link between Stormont Castle and Westminster

Time: 3.40 - 4.20pm

Present: Rt Hon Peter Brooke MP, John Chilcott, Quentin Thomas, note-taker, Danny McNeill(BFS).

The SOS gave an account of the developments since our last meeting in December.

He had met with the two unionist leaders the previous Tuesday. The issues had been:

1. Two meetings during the election or one. It looked as though this could be dealt with. The SOS was clearly bemused by what he described as 'their metaphysics'.
2. The issue of the change of administration was more serious. He was fairly critical of Kevin MacNamara's letter. 'It showed a party which had been out of government for twelve years' he said. This could be as make or break as the chairmanship issue.
3. Paisley indicated that the chairmanship might be able to be resolved, and also that he had never said (contra to Sunday Tribune report), that strand 2 would not begin before an election. It could do so, Paisley said.
4. The venue and size of teams the SOS said should be dealt with by parties face to face.
5. The unionists had requested a briefing on the block grant etc, and it sounded as though this had been granted. We could therefore also avail of such.

The SOS also recounted the meeting by video-link which he had just had with the SDLP (JH, SM, EMcG, Dr JH) - I had met them on the way in.

1. The two meetings or one did not seem to be a major problem.
2. They were creating a problem over the order of Strand 2 (London-Dublin-Belfast, instead of London-Belfast-Dublin). The SOS said that he would hard-line on this, as on the chairmanship. To open this sort of issue up would simply wreck the whole thing.
3. The change of administration issue was the major problem for the SDLP.

4. Format of team and venue for Strand 1, was to be settled across the table.

The SOS described John Hume's attitude thus: 'an element of timelessness seems to enter John Hume's thinking on some of these issues.'

The proposed meeting of leaders for Monday next, is not possible for John Hume - he has to be in Europe. Suggested Thursday at 2.30pm at Westminster. We have to clarify if this is teams or leaders. SOS says, 'whatever group a party needs to do negotiation at the time'.