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FROM: D G McNEILL, PAB
DATE: 14 JANUARY 1991

[Copy No of 6]

cc PS/Secretary of State(B&L)[3&4] -
Mr Deverell [5] - B
File [6]

PS/PUS (B&L) [1&2] - B

POLITICAL MOVEMENT AND THE PROVISIONALS - JOHN HUME

1. I spoke to John Hume by phone following his meeting with Dr Mawhinney and PUS at which he received a copy of the paper produced in the Secretary of State's meeting with the Unionist leaders on 24 December.
2. Hume said to me that he was astonished at the document since it indicated to him that there are really good prospects of talks taking place. He said that he could not see how his party could be opposed to the paper though he will not be able to consult his colleagues until early week commencing 14 January 1991. The only point of issue he raised concerned the words in paragraph 9 about the second strand beginning "in consultation with the parties". He expressed his irritation with the Unionist leaders over that saying that they continue to introduce new "preconditions" but did not give the impression that he regarded this in itself as something to which he would fundamentally object.
3. However, he did say that the document produced a real dilemma for him. He did not want the talks to proceed if they jeopardised the prospects of a cessation of PIRA violence and unless the process could accommodate the possibility of such a cessation he was concerned that it could make such a cessation less likely. At this stage he had not developed any thoughts as to how the process could accommodate such a development. Off the top of his head he suggested that we could leave the names of the parties out of the document and only refer to those who had an elected mandate and who

did not support violence. However, he acknowledged that it would be difficult to exclude minor parties from the process if this definition were adopted and if we defined an elected mandate in relation to elections to Westminster it would lead to the non-involvement of the Alliance party. When I said this and again, off the top of his head, he said that he did not regard their non-involvement as important; I stressed that Government would see it as important.

4. All of this made him reluctant to agree to the document too quickly though he did not see how he could reasonably do that. He said that he would proceed to consult his colleagues who are ignorant of developments on the Republican front. I told him that I would contact him again this week before Thursday's meeting and after I had consulted PUS.

5. He said he had not fully consulted the Irish Government about the paper but the limited soundings he had taken with those who are informed on the Republican discussions leads him to believe that the Taoiseach may want to put the political talks on the long finger. Again he said it would be difficult for them to do this and still seem reasonable. However, he thought that Haughey would much prefer to work on the possibilities of promoting a cessation of violence rather than on the present political talks process unless the latter could accommodate the former.

(SIGNED)

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