

(19) - 4 FEB 1994

532

From: D E S Blatherwick
Date: 3 February 1994

To: Mr Thomas

cc: PS/SofS (L&B)
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)

PS/Mr Fell

Mr Legge

Mr Bell

Mr Deverell

Mr Watkins

Mr Williams

Mr Wood

Mr Brooker

Mr Daniell

Mr Maccabe

Mr Quinn

Mr Caine

Mr Archer, RID

28 FEB 1994
~~13~~ - 3 FEB 1994

Handwritten notes:
DME to see
2) -> file

POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

1. Jonathan Stephens sent me a copy of his record of the Stocktake Meeting on 1 February. I agree with the conclusions insofar as they relate to the Irish. I also very much agree with the speaking points in your minute of yesterday.

2. The Irish remain deeply suspicious of our intentions and of alleged understandings between the Prime Minister and Mr Molyneux. They believe we pay too much attention to UUP worries about the DUP. Though this Government has gone much further than its predecessors in taking account of unionist concerns, and indeed tried to take them on board during the drafting of the Joint Declaration, Irish Ministers and officials have little empathy with unionists. Spring's efforts to get closer to the UUP have been frustrated by Mr Molyneux's reluctance to meet him.

CONFIDENTIAL

3. I agree that the Irish are committed to the talks process in the sense that they believe only an inclusive process is likely to bring about a settlement, and they are jealous to preserve their place at the table. But they remain deeply sceptical about the chances of success, and Sinn Fein's recent rise will make them more sceptical still. The big question is how long they will be prepared to give the Provisionals, and how long they will be prepared to delay over the talks process, even in private with us. With some justification, they suspect that if they give us an inch we will take a mile, and that the fact of the relaunch of Anglo-Irish private discussions on Strands 2 and 3 would soon find its way into the newspapers. They also find delay attractive because it puts off their having to make awkward policy decisions on Strand 2 and commit themselves to us in circumstances where they do not trust us to keep their views from the other parties. Though they are eager to keep us within the 26 March 1991 bounds, we have detected one or two signs of scepticism that the objectives of the talks are still relevant in the light of the Joint Declaration. Moreover, they are now back in bed with the SDLP: they may find it difficult to concert a line on Strand 2 and 3 issues with Hume. All good reasons for putting things off while they can.

4. Spring and Geoghegan-Quinn said at last week's IGC that they would want to wait until the end of February before signalling an intensification of the talks process. According to today's press, the Taoiseach may be ready to wait until St Patrick's Day. But I doubt he has made up his mind. It may be that the Irish will repeatedly put off a decision. And in the meantime, they may be reluctant to commit themselves even to a private timetable for private exchanges with us. As last year showed, they can spin out private talks ad infinitum.

5. One Irish worry should be the position of the SDLP now that Frankenstein, as you put it, is out of the cellar. Oddly, there are few signs of this. At some stage, the Taoiseach (and Hume - what on earth is he up to?) may decide to call it a day, publicly state that the Provisionals have demonstrated their intransigence

CONFIDENTIAL

and mobilise public opinion - including security measures - against them. But such a point may be months ahead: indeed, the Irish may never reach it. The Taoiseach is firmly committed to the "peace process", as Section 31, the Adams visa and many speeches show. He is a risk taker and will not turn back lightly. Hume's strategy for nearly a year now has been to bring the Provisionals in from the cold and build a nationalist bloc. One possibility is that the Irish may follow such a course, for example by setting up their Forum for Peace and Reconciliation and inviting the Provisionals, or some of them, to join even before a definitive renunciation of violence (for example by contriving a distinction between Sinn Fein and PIRA). I have seen no sign of this, and think it unlikely, but it might in the end depend on what the alternatives were.

6. This minute has sought to set out a gloomy scenario (the cheerful one is easy). It may well not come about. In any case, we can only proceed as the Stocktake on Tuesday suggested.

MRS D E MCNALLY
Constitutional and Political Division
GAS Ext 3786

D E S Blatherwick
AMBASSADOR

CONFIDENTIAL