

FROM: Q J THOMAS
DUS(L)

cc PS/PUS (L) [2]
Mr Deverell* [3]
Mr Cooke [4]
Mr Rickard* [5]
Mr May* [6]
Mr Glyn-Jones+ [7]
Ms Melanie Leech+ [8]
Mr Lyne+ [9]
Mr Sawers
(PS Foreign Secretary)+ [10]
File [11]

PS/SofS (Mr Stephens) (B)* [1]

BUTLER/NALLY GROUP

The Butler/Nally Group is to meet on Wednesday in London. The meeting has been arranged at the suggestion of the Irish side. The purpose appears to be to show us some new language, perhaps in the form of additional paragraphs, rather than replacement language for the last version of the Joint Declaration. The reference Mr O hUiginn made on the phone to "ecclesiastical language" suggests that this may be language proposed by Archbishop Eames in an attempt to make it acceptable to Unionist opinion.

2. In the meantime the Taoiseach and other Irish Ministers have been talking up the prospects for peace, attempting to narrow the gap which had opened between them and Hume, emphasising that the work on peace, stability and reconciliation agreed in Brussels is distinct from and prior to the Talks process, and implying that its success demands more imagination from HMG.

3. At some point this may require a firm response, which may have the effect of distancing HMG not only from Hume/Adams but also from Hume personally and from the Irish Government's notion of a peace process prior to and separate from the Talks process.

4. Unfortunately, given the Taoiseach's pre-occupations, this may make considerable difficulties for the Talks process itself. But for the moment, for various reasons, not least what was said in Brussels, we should probably play for time; and I believe it was Sir Robin Butler's initial instinct to play the forthcoming meeting in listening mode, while making clear that the fundamental difficulties with the Joint Declaration approach have not gone away.

(SIGNED)

Q J THOMAS
 DUS(L)
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 OAB EXT 6447

The Taoiseach and the British Prime Minister are committed to the inalienable right to both their peoples of seeking and achieving a united Ireland and of ending a conflict which has been so manifestly to the detriment of all. Both countries are committed to the belief that the ending of divisions can come about only through the agreement and cooperation of the people. Both are committed to the belief that the people of both islands, representing both traditions in Ireland, have the right and the obligation to promote cooperation at all levels on the basis of the fundamental principles, obligations and commitments under international agreements, to which they have justly committed themselves, and the guidance which each government has given. It is their aim to foster agreement and reconciliation, leading to a new political agreement founded on consent and encompassing the whole island and its relations with the neighbouring island.