

SECRET

FROM: P N BELL, AUS(L)
9 December 1993

Copy No of 23

DESK IMMEDIATE

Mr Beeton [1]

- cc PS/Secretary of State (L) [2]
- PS/Michael Ancram (L) [3]
- PS/Sir J Wheeler (L) [4]
- PS/PUS (L) [5]
- PS/Mr Fell [6]
- Mr Thomas [7]
- Mr Legge [8]
- Mr Deverell [9]
- Mr Watkins * [10]
- Mr Williams [11]
- Mr Wood (L&B) * [12&13]
- Mr Brooker [14]
- Mr Cooke [15]
- Mr Dodds * [16]
- Mr Maccabe [17]
- Mr Rickard [18]
- Ms Jude * [19]
- HMA, Dublin [20]
- Mr Archer, RID [21]
- Mr Caine * [22]
- File [23]

* With Mr Beeton's submission of 9 December.

JOINT DECLARATION INITIATIVE - HANDLING PLAN

Timing of launch

Thank you for sending me a copy of your submission of 8 December on proposals for handling the publication of the JD, possibly as early as next Tuesday (Summit) and Wednesday (Parliamentary Statement). I have been asked, in the light of the meeting of this morning's Ministerial Group, to look at arrangements for presentation in the round, with a view to submitting more comprehensive advice to the Secretary of State in the weekend box.

Meeting - Agenda

2. Starting from your draft plan, that suggests to me a meeting early tomorrow to see what further elements may be desirable (or, given the abominably tight deadlines to which we are working) or

SECRET

feasible to maximise the 'sales value' of our product, above all in the critical Northern Ireland market. I am aware of the Prime Minister's concern to ensure that the JDI is effectively presented in Great Britain (he has already suggested that such eminent clerics as Cardinal Hume and the Archbishop of Canterbury might be enlisted); but I am firmly of the view that, whatever the JDI's reception in Huntingdon, it will profit the Prime Minister nothing in the long run if he loses out in Hillsborough. (What follows is, incidentally, addressed severely to the mechanics of presentation as opposed to the intrinsic merits of the JDI on which some colleagues have separately expressed reservations.)

3. I believe we need to consider at least the following issues:

- the Handling Plan attached to your minute;
- how to maximise the impact in GB (the Prime Minister's concern), although without forgetting - see above - Northern Ireland;
- how to get the message across in Northern Ireland as effectively as possible;
- who does what (both Ministers and officials):
 - a. between now and the Prime Ministerial Statement; and
 - b. afterwards.

Comment

4. To assist in a meeting, for which the above might serve as a rough agenda, it will be helpful if:

SECRET

- SIL could report on the substantial additional briefing material they now have in hand (including a "launch statement; bull points, positive and defensive; and, a la Anglo-Irish Agreement, a pre-emptive 'joint' Q&A brief" and its place in the wider scheme of things - material has been coming in while this note was written);
- Information Services how we ensure that our message is put across as effectively (and succinctly) as possible on the NI media.

5. My concern is that, if the role of the Secretary of State (and NI Ministers generally) is confined to supporting the Prime Minister and Mr Hurd at a post-Summit press conference and during a Parliamentary Statement in London we risk irretrievably losing ground in a Northern Ireland where, as at present drafted, the JDI is likely to receive a hostile reception from the Unionist community. I hope we can, therefore, consider:

- how the Secretary of State (and his Ministerial team) can be most effectively deployed in the media (eg by an immediate follow up' broadcast to the nation' by the Secretary of State); followed up by a full programme of interviews etc involving, possibly, Sir J Wheeler and Michael Ancram also);
- what are the 'bull points' which we hope will hit the UTV screens when this is the lead story. We equally need to ensure that the risk is minimised that, out of a preter-naturally long statement, headline writers etc will select the most damaging texts out of context. (My inclination, and I should be particularly grateful for Information Service's advice, is how we ensure that TV/headline message is as favourable as we can hope in the circumstances);

SECRET

- what 'great and good' people we can pray in aid at such short notice (Archbishop Eames; Cardinal Daly; any former Secretary of State (Mr Mason?); anyone sympathetic to HMG in NI and trusted? I fear Mr Molyneaux is likely to be non-expostulatory at best).

6. I should also be grateful if Mr Dodds could review the files in his possession concerning our 'presentational plans' for handling a successful outcome of the Talks Process; and SIL might wish to review some of the arrangements we made at the time of the launch of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. (One point that occurs is writing a short 'bull pointish' letter to opinion formers/notables plus a copy of the text itself; it may be that the Ministerial team may have a special role in 'selling' the JDI to their respective 'constituencies' within Northern Ireland.) You will note that I am assuming that there will be a 'hymn sheet' prepared for general use in the Province, and also, probably a shorter version for use by members of the government generally (for appearances on Any Questions, dealing with constituents etc etc).

7. You will note that I have judged it essential, if this exercise is to have any hope of success, to copy in various key officials elsewhere.

8. A meeting has now been fixed of key players at 11.30 tomorrow.

(Signed PNB)

P N BELL
OAB 6469