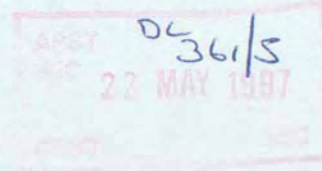


From: **A J Whysall**
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Date: 21 May, 1997



5/24/97

cc PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas (B&L)
Mr Bell
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
Mr Wood (B&L)
Mr Brooker
Mr Hill (B&L)
Mr Lavery
Mr Maccabe
Mr Warner
Mr Gibbons
Mrs McNally (B&L)
HMA Dublin*
Mr Lamont, RID, FCO*
Mr McDonald, Washington*
*IPL please pass

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L)

**INDEPENDENT CHAIRMEN OF TALKS:
INTRODUCTORY PHONE CALLS**

1. This is to **provide a brief for any meeting between the Secretary of State and Senator Mitchell**, which, however, I gather now looks unlikely; and if it is not possible, to suggest an **early telephone call**.
2. The main objectives would be to:
 - a) **reintroduce herself**; reassure the Senator of her, and the Government's, **commitment to bringing about political movement**, giving the **talks their best chance**;
 - b) make clear **we cherish him**, and **sustain his commitment** to the process;
 - c) **explain our proposed initiative on decommissioning** early in the talks, seek to **engage him** in it, and **his support for it with the Irish and UUP** (directly and through the Administration).
3. It would still also be useful for the Secretary of State, as a lesser priority, to **call General John de Chastelain and Prime Minister Harri Holkeri**, for

similar purposes – my note of 7 May provides briefing. (General de Chastelain has now sent the Secretary of State a note of congratulation on her appointment.)

Senator Mitchell

4. The Secretary of State knows Senator Mitchell well, but may nevertheless find useful the attached brief **biography** (A).
5. He was appointed as Independent Chairman of the Plenary to Unionist protest, because (being associated with the US Administration, and a Catholic with some Irish ancestry to boot) he was feared pro-Nationalist. The UUP acquiesced in his appointment after a due display of ‘emasculating’ him: the DUP and UKUP walked out, soon returned, though never formally accepted him. He worked hard to establish his even-handedness, which, with his ability and professionalism, are acknowledged on all sides. The priority he attached to conspicuous impartiality was perhaps why he has been less of a ‘fixer’ than some expected: most of the work of pursuing compromise was left to the Governments. He was also often absent because of other commitments, but always ready to return when needed.
6. He stays well-informed about events in Northern Ireland, seeing press cuttings daily, and our own, and the Irish Embassy, talk to him frequently. He will also now have reports from his staffer David Pozorski, who was in Belfast last week talking to the parties (and officials). He is close to the Administration. But he is his own man, with a better appreciation of the sensitivities of Northern Ireland than many in Washington. And he is well placed to relay them back.
7. As to **his future**, Senator Mitchell has promised to be back in June, but given no commitments beyond that. If the process was deadlocked past the summer, it is unlikely he would stay. If it moved into substance, he might well – and he could be extremely valuable. Although General de Chastelain was originally announced as Chairman of Strand Two, there would be a good case for Senator Mitchell filling that role, the General attending to decommissioning. If he chose to go, he would be very difficult to replace in the leading Chairmanship role.

Speaking note

8. A **speaking note** is at (B). It majors on decommissioning, following the advice in Mr Hill’s submission of yesterday. The Secretary of State may also want to suggest the possibility of a meeting between the Senator and the Secretary of State on the morning of Monday 2 June (or the note before?) – but you will want to check the Secretary of State’s diary.

Recommendation

9. I recommend that, if no meeting is possible, the Secretary of State **telephones Senator Mitchell before or during her trip** to the US; and that she also calls **the other Chairmen at an early opportunity.**

A J Whysall

SENATOR GEORGE J(OHN) MITCHELL: BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

- Born 1933, Maine.
- Attorney, then briefly federal judge, 1960-1980, largely in Maine.
- Senator (Dem) for Maine, 1980-1994.
- Senate Majority Leader, 1989 until his retirement in 1994.

In the Senate, his main legislative concern was the environment, followed by health issues and tax reform. His voting record was consistently liberal.

- Special Adviser to the President on Economic Initiatives for Ireland, 1995
- Chairman of the International Body on decommissioning, 1995-96

Currently –

- Chairman of the Plenary, Northern Ireland multi-party negotiations, 1996-
- Partner in the Washington law firm of Verner Liipfert Bernhardt McPherson Hand (he has been much criticised lately for taking on the account of the tobacco lobby);
- Chairman of the International Crisis Group, a private multi-national organisation dedicated to 'prevention of crises originating from human causes'.

Future –

Senator Mitchell has regularly been tipped for leading posts: Baseball Commissioner (work apparently close to his heart) several years ago, more recently the Secretaryship of State (for which he ran Mrs Albright close). He is also spoken of in connection with Supreme Court judgeships: if a vacancy in the post of Chief Justice arose in the next few years, he is one of few candidates likely to be acceptable to both President and Senate. There was talk of him as a future Ambassador to the United Kingdom, but recent press reports suggest he has turned the post down.

Personal –



CALL TO OR MEETING WITH SENATOR MITCHELL: SPEAKING NOTE

Tony Blair and I delighted you are coming back to the talks. Know **how much you have given** to the process, and **how much it depends** on you. Tony and I look **forward very much to meeting you** on 2 June.

As far as this Government goes, there will be **continuity in political development policy**. We backed all the main initiatives of recent years. Tony's speech on 16 May set out the basis of our approach.

But I hope that we can inject some **new vigour**. We are **determined to give the talks every chance**. They will be a priority for Tony, for me, and for my colleague Paul Murphy who will be closely involved – I believe he is also meeting you on 2 June.

We **want to get Sinn Féin in**, but will **press on anyway whether they do or not**. And we want **at the earliest stage to find a way through the decommissioning obstacle**. On the second, we shall be **very dependent on your help**.

Sinn Féin

We **want Sinn Féin in the talks** – but it has to be on the terms laid down in the law: a **restoration of the ceasefire, and an unequivocal one**, shown by words and deeds. We were **grateful to President Clinton and the Administration** for their helpful statements. It is **difficult to be clear what the Republican movement as a whole wants, or can deliver**: attacks in Northern Ireland, including the shooting of a policewoman in the back several weeks ago, and the disruption in Great Britain throughout the election campaign, make it hard to be too confident. And they mean **we cannot lightly take Sinn Féin's word about the genuineness of a ceasefire**. But **we want to do what we can to ease matters**: hence the meeting between officials and Sinn Féin on Wednesday...

Decommissioning

We see advantages in an **early attempt**, preferably by **the two Governments together**, to get over the decommissioning hurdle, and fix a **firm date for the start of substantive negotiations** (probably in September).

This is a **good (or less bad) time**: there is a **momentum** generated by the election and Tony's speech; the **UUP and David Trimble** specifically **should be more confident after the election**, though still hard to read clearly; we may by an agreement be able to **bind the UUP into the process** more closely. If we can get agreement during June, followed by a break, it makes **the choreography of entry by Sinn Féin easier**; and the **prospect of talks in September increases pressure on them** to make possible their entry.

If we **do not act**, **the talks may lose all credibility** – with a risk of **complete collapse during the marching season**; the **loyalist ceasefire may become still more threadbare**.

We have **given the Irish a paper** on a way forward. They are considering it. If there is to be a chance of getting the UUP to move we **need to do what we can to give them cover** – they must be able to present plausibly any agreement as giving a good assurance of **some decommissioning during talks**.

We shall **work as closely as possible with the Irish** – of whatever Government. Tony Blair and saw John Bruton and Dick Spring during our first week: (Tony's first meeting with a leader of another government).

Conclusion

We should **much welcome your views**. And **greatly value your help in setting a rapid pace on decommissioning**. Have you **heard from the Irish on this**? They have understandable doubts about 'concessions' to Unionists over this; but unless it is clear that **both governments are committed to working for actual decommissioning during negotiations** (assuming progress is being made in them); and to mechanisms to give some assurance of it the UUP will find it hard to move. **If you share that analysis**, helpful to offer it to those you talk to.

I would find it very **helpful to have a fuller discussion** before talks begin. [Meeting before or after you see Tony Blair on 2 June? Our offices might be in touch.]

It would also be useful for the **two Governments to meet you and your colleagues** together – because of the Irish election and my commitments in Parliament (we are reviving the forum, and that will be debated late on 2 June) that may have to be on the morning of 3 June.