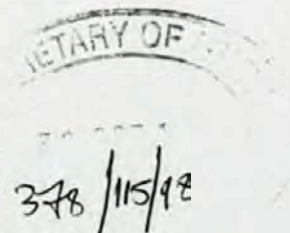




10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA



From the Principal Private Secretary

29 October 1998

- AS/SCS Bal
- AS/HR Murphy Bal
- AS/HR Ingram Bal
- AS/AS Bal
- AS/HR Sample MR Hill
- MR Watkins
- MR ~~Sample~~ Jeffrey
- MR MacCabe
- MR Leach

Dear Nick,

**ALL PARTY MEETINGS, 29 OCTOBER:
TRIMBLE'S VIEWS**

When I spoke with Trimble about the LVF, I took the opportunity to ask ~~MR Leach~~ him about today's meetings. Trimble confirmed that the morning session on ~~MR Leach~~ departmental structures had gone well, and had resulted in a focussed discussion. ~~MR Ball~~ Eleven key points of difficulty had been identified, but many of them were simply a question of making decisions.

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In contrast, the afternoon session had been messy. Many of those around the table did not understand the distinction between areas of cooperation and implementation bodies. They had wanted to transfer functions to implementation bodies, and retain them at the same time. Part of the problem had been that, perhaps because of the presence of Sinn Fein, the SDLP had raised their sights. This did not make things any easier. So the meeting had been unsatisfactory. They had ended up with a list of areas where more technical work was needed.

Trimble said that he hoped that they could have a more focussed meeting on Monday involving the UUP, SDLP, Irish and British. I said that I did not think the Irish and the SDLP would be keen on this format, because of their desire to be inclusive. Trimble claimed to be unaware of this difficulty. He was willing to make some side arrangement to keep Sinn Fein involved but he could not attend a meeting with them but without the DUP. He added that, when he had spoken to Ahern earlier in the week, Ahern had focussed on training and the Irish language, and had acknowledged that economic development was difficult for Trimble. Ahern had also promised to send a full list of possible implementation bodies, but this had not yet turned up. Finally, Trimble said that he had had discussions at the beginning of the day with Mallon. They had agreed that they should try to reach a private conclusion on the implementation bodies, but park this. They would say in public that they had not yet sorted this out, but were confident they could do so quickly, and use this to put pressure on Sinn Fein.

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I said that the Prime Minister was very keen that the earliest possible progress should be made on all these issues. I hoped he would meet Mallon soon to take the substance forward. Trimble said that he was keen to do so, particularly on North/South, but there was a mismatch between his diary and Mallon's for the moment.

I subsequently discussed all this with David Lavery. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] He (Lavery) was worried about asking for lots more technical work on North/South issues - a lot of it had already been done, and it implied too long a timescale. The SDLP were even more worried. But that was what the meeting had seemed to agree.

I said that our major concern was to have a follow-up process in being (Lavery agreed) [REDACTED]

Lavery said he would discuss all this with Bill Jeffrey and others tomorrow. He added that Trimble was also meeting Adams again tomorrow morning.

Comment

We clearly need to work hard on Trimble to take a more positive line on North/South, and get across that the quadripartite meeting he has in mind poses huge difficulties for the Irish and the SDLP, if Sinn Fein are not there. I will try to get the Prime Minister to speak to him about this, probably over the weekend, and to encourage further all party meetings on North/South issues, or at least some alternative process to the same effect.

I am copying this letter to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Sebastian Wood (Cabinet Office) and by fax to Sir Christopher Meyer (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

Yours ever

pp John Holmes

JOHN HOLMES

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Northern Ireland Office

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