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FROM: JOHN SEMPLE
28 JANUARY 1999

PS/MR MURPHY (DFP, B&L) - O

Approved 1/2

CONSULTANCY FOR THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER

1. I discussed this issue with Mr Murphy last Monday.
2. I have explored the possibility of increasing UUP and SDLP Party funding and have considered whether temporary special advisers could be appointed. There are serious difficulties with both these courses of action. Increase in Party funding for UUP/SDLP would inevitably have to involve the other Parties and the Cabinet Office. Similarly, the positions on advisers has been settled with some difficulty and re-opening it with the Cabinet Office would take time and might not succeed.
3. David Trimble wants advice now on the prospective legislation. A contract with Clifford Chance (Austen Morgan) has been negotiated by the Government Purchasing Agency at a keen price (£16,000 plus expenses). What the First Minister wants is technical legal advice on the legislation.
4. The basic principle is that party political work should not be paid for out of public (Departmental) funds. The context for this present proposal is



not, however, so clear cut. Scrutiny of the legislation relates to his First Minister duties on North/South bodies and co-operation as set out in the Agreement but also to his role as UUP leader. We understand that Mr Trimble expects the advice to be personal to him and not to be shared with officials or the Deputy First Minister, which might be interpreted as giving the exercise a party political flavour but the fact is that in the shadow period it is extremely difficult to disentangle the 2 roles.

5. In normal circumstances we might regard this expenditure as more appropriate to party than to public funds. But given the exceptional nature of the current shadow period (and the genuine difficulty which Mr Trimble faces in dealing with the mass of legislation, etc, in a short timescale as well as the political importance of adhering to the set timetable, you may feel that an exceptional response is warranted. If so, we can authorise the expenditure.
6. We will ask Mr Trimble to certify (as he did for the previous commission) that the work has been done, that it constitutes good value for money and that it would only be used in his capacity as First Minister.
7. I have agreed this submission with Pat Carvill who is the Accounting Officer. I now seek Mr Murphy's agreement to proceed as suggested.



8. I have yet to hear further from Seamus Mallon about his PR consultant.
We can address this if and when it comes.

John Semple

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