

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2014/105/827
Creation Date(s):	31 December 1984
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Reunion

Secret

Post-Chequers: Hume's View

I saw Hume at his home in Derry in the evening of 28th December at his request.

Hume does not believe that major progress is likely in the short term on a comprehensive package.

He said that his Party had developed a strategy for the months ahead to deal with the possibility that there might be no successful outcome from the next Summit or the possibility that there might not be a further Summit in the short term. In either case the SDLP would call on the South to establish an "Irish dimension now." This would mean establishing under the aegis of the Forum a professional mechanism for carrying out two activities:

- monitoring nationalists' "complaints" against the authorities and bringing them to international attention;
- monitoring and promoting North-South cooperation in the various sectors identified by the Forum (agricultural, tourism, transport etc.).

He said Mallon had in his possession a paper setting out this approach. He added that he was surprised that Mallon had not given it to us in the past week. He agreed that we could ask Mallon for it on the basis of his suggestion (Note: Mr. O'Ceallaigh will do this in the coming days).

On a more positive vein, Hume said he would wish our Ministers to consider two proposals which might be put to the British, both of which he considered "feasible".

First the early announcement of an intention to introduce legislation to provide for the alternative vote system for single seat constituencies in Northern Ireland for Westminster elections. This would mean up to seven seats for Northern Ireland nationalists of which the SDLP would get five or six. This would have several advantages for the SDLP. (a) It would immediately remove pressure for "unity" candidates (which he would continue to oppose no matter what the circumstances) and this could have

importance in the forthcoming local elections; (b) it would create a marked improvement in Party morale; (c) it was already his own experience that having a seat at Westminster and a staff in his own constituency created a very solid base, in terms both of constituency service and of publicity, for political activity. .

Second, Hume suggested that there should be established a series of Commissions within the AIIC to monitor and report North-South cooperation in the economic sectors explored by the Forum and based on the findings of the Forum.

Hume then turned to the debate on devolution inside his own Party. He said that SDLP feeling was very much against the Assembly. He said there was deep distrust of the Unionists - McGraddie was completing a dossier of continuing Unionist abuses in local government. (Note: Mr. O Ceallaigh will be in touch with McGraddie about this in the coming days; the Department circulated its own survey of these abuses shortly before the Summit). How could you entrust power to these people? How could you even share power with them?

Hume continued that he was now convinced that the British were attempting to devise a scheme for devolution which would be neither power-sharing nor majority rule and which he could not "sell" to his supporters.

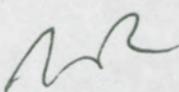
He had told his Party that "the name of the game now" on devolution was "don't be wrong-footed". In other words the SDLP would not refuse to talk to the Unionists.

He detected the danger that the Unionists, particularly the Official Unionists, might now seem unusually "reasonable" in their approach and that the SDLP must not be seen to be "unreasonable". So far as his Party were concerned their approach in talks would be (as he had told the Taoiseach in Strasbourg - there is no note of that exchange) that nothing would be excluded from the agenda. For the SDLP that meant that they would talk on the basis of the Forum Report which is and remains their policy.

Clearly Hume expects, even perhaps hopes, that the Unionists will reject the SDLP approach out of hand.

My overall impression was that Hume has more or less decided to postpone for the foreseeable future - perhaps for Thatcher's administration (he seems to think she may be toppled from within, within a year - I said I thought not) - any attempt at a major initiative and is moreover opposed to any form of devolution. This seems to me to be a dangerous and questionable approach. It may reflect a degree of post-Chequers "blues". I did not disclose my opinion to him.

P.S. I had a phonecall at home last night from Hume who spoke in Irish. He said he had had a message from Thatcher ("la na scolb") inviting him to a private talk in No. 10 on 16 January. He added that he continued (in contradiction with what he had said two nights earlier) to hope for progress on the larger package. No doubt the development can be seen as encouraging from a number of points of view.



M. J. Lillis

31 December 1984

cc Taoiseach
Tanaiste
Minister
Secretary
Mr. Nally
Mr. Ward
Ambassador Dorr