

E. R. Desk ASAP

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PAB/1714/BN

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - m
PS/Mr Scott (L&B) - m
PS/Dr Mawhinney (L&B) - m
PS/PUS (L&B) - m
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Stephens
Mr Brennan - m
Mr Chesterton - m
Mr Innes
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence
Mr Gilliland
Mr Bell - m
Miss Elliott - m
Mr Blackwell
Mr S Hewitt
Mr G Hewitt
Mr Ehrman - m
Mr Mackay - m

RB 145/4

FURTHER UUP CONTACT

I spoke to my contact in UUP this morning.

Assembly

1. UUP expects that the announcement of increased action against the Agreement by way of civil disobedience will amount to a recommendation that Unionists defer payment of rates. My contact does not believe that this action will be seen, either by the public or HMG, as unconstitutional or illegal and hopes that it will not prejudice talks.
2. He told me DUP members have been led to believe, by their leaders, that the action to be announced will include recommendations not to pay TV licences or car tax and perhaps even a suggestion that Unionists should de-licence their motor vehicles.
3. UUP has also successfully persuaded the 'hard' element in their own party together with the DUP to abandon their intention to put forward a motion calling for an adjournment of the Assembly sine die.

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's letter

4. He reiterated his view that discussions, when they do take place, will be between the two Unionist leaders and senior civil servants (again mentioned PUS and Mr Bloomfield). The UUP draft reply to the PM is being discussed in their headquarters this morning and his leader will be meeting Dr Paisley later today to agree a final version. He is hopeful it will issue today or tomorrow.

Anglo-Irish Conference

5. There is apprehension within the UUP that an early Conference could scupper the initiative before it gets off the ground. He told me he realises that a Conference is due but asked that we take into account the importance of talks at this time and suggested that if it is absolutely essential to have a Conference soon HMG should consider waiting at least until some progress is made in discussions about 'a framework for dialogue' before moving forward on a Conference which could then be held in London. He went on to say it would be completely unacceptable if officials involved in discussions had to break off in order to attend such a Conference.

General

6. During a general discussion on the way forward he told me that the influence of the integrationists in his party was becoming stronger not least because such a solution would avoid the necessity of the backwoodsmen in his party having to accept the possibility of power sharing. We should not be under any illusion that, to many people in his party, power sharing was as unacceptable to them as it would be to the DUP. He realises that devolution is an integral part of the Agreement and he suggested that this might be one of the first topics to be raised in discussions.

7. At this stage he told me that UUP friends in Westminster are promoting the idea that the Government does not have an entirely closed mind on the issue of integration and that if sufficient pressure was applied it could become another plank

E. R.

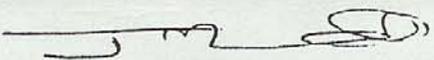
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on the Government's policy on Northern Ireland.

Comment

8. My contact was fairly confident that his party would be able to hold the line against the harder elements in the Assembly today though I detected a note of doubt when he started to discuss the sort of rhetoric which might be employed during the debate. He is fully aware, as is his party, that talks would be in considerable jeopardy if the unionist parties were to recommend anything which would be illegal. Despite his assertion that HMG would not look upon a deferment of rates as a reason to abandon discussions there is no doubt that he is concerned on this point.

9. I will keep in contact with him.



J E McCONNELL
Political Affairs Division

23 April 1986

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