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1. Mr. Humphreys  
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MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND JOHN HUME MP HELD ON  
18 DECEMBER 1985



Mr Hume said that in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Secretary of State was now "sitting on the solution to the Irish problem". What was needed was a steady nerve in the coming months. In particular, the Secretary of State should not compromise too far in order to placate the Unionists, who would be on the lookout for any sign of weakness so that they could seek further concessions. It was important to rely on the steadfastness of the Government and the Prime Minister in order to bring the Unionists to face reality; a Conservative Government was best placed to make progress in this field. In this context Mr Hume felt that the Prime Minister had been wrong to suggest that devolution would bring about the end of the Conference; such statements angered the minority community and the majority who appreciated that what was being said was simply not true. However Mr Hume did concede that devolution would considerably reduce the role of the Conference.

2. Mr Hume said that opposition to the Conference was not as great as the Secretary of State might suppose. Four Unionist commercial travellers had told him the previous week that they had yet to come across a businessman who was against the Agreement; and after a meeting with the governing body of the Presbyterian Church, two of those present had emphasised to him that the moderator did not represent the views of many of those in his church. The Secretary of State said that he remained of the view that there was serious disquiet in the Protestant community and advised Mr Hume to talk to Bishop Mehaffey about the position.

3. On being pressed by the Secretary of State to adopt a positive approach to devolution, Mr Hume repeated the assurance which he gave in the debate on the Agreement that he would start talking with the other parties immediately if they were willing. He would be willing to consider a formula which provided for power sharing for two terms and for a review of the position at that point. He did not rule out the possibility that Sir Frederick Catherwood's proposals might be a starting point for discussion. Mr Hume was committed to

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making Northern Ireland work, a position which had drawn criticism from Mr Haughey but for which he would make no apology. If there ever was to be Irish unity, that could only be achieved after the divisions between the communities had broken down, which meant seeking reconciliation and workable systems of government within the Province. Provided that RMG stood firm, the Unionists would be brought round. The Unionists' position was analogous to the whites in Alabama who as a result of Federal Government intervention had in 20 years been transformed into one of the most liberal groups in the US.

4. On law and order, the Secretary of State drew attention to the harm being caused by some of Seamus Mallon's pronouncements. Mr Hume said that a quote attributed to Mr Mallon last week, in which he was alleged to have said that the Agreement constituted the first stage of the disbandment of the UDR, was inaccurate and had been denied - although the denial was not as widely reported as the original quote. However Mr Mallon's interview on Sunday had been unfortunate. Mr Hume had advised him not to give any further interviews on law and order matters before the by-elections. However the Secretary of State should understand that it was impossible for the SDLP to give the UDR any sort of backing; there had been too many cases of criminal behaviour on the part of members of the Regiment and of harrassment of Catholics going about their ordinary business.

5. The Secretary of State pressed Mr Hume on the RUC, making the point that they had proved themselves a professional impartial police force and deserved unequivocal support from all constitutional parties. If the SDLP could back the force, without qualification, that could have an enormous effect on the attitude of moderate Protestant opinion towards the Agreement. Many people had referred to the need for a gesture of this sort from the SDLP. The RUC had shown themselves well able to stand firm against loyalists at Portadown and, recently, at Maryfield where 37 policemen had been injured. Mr Hume at first professed himself unable to understand why the current formulation on the RUC (support for the RUC in impartially investigating crime etc) was not sufficient. He said that he could modify this to "support for the RUC in impartially

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carrying out their duty". The Secretary of State pointed out that this was still not wholehearted support and suggested that Mr Hume could refer to the present professionalism of the RUC, their determination to uphold the law and protect both communities and say that the force therefore deserved full support (while always reserving the right to be critical in individual cases). Mr Hume fully accepted that the RUC were now a professional and on the whole impartial force but could not bring himself to undertake publicly to give full unqualified backing. He did however propose to make a speech complementing the RUC on their performance at Portadown and Maryfield within the next few days. There were signs that Mr Hume was beginning to accept that some easement of the SDLP position on the RUC was desirable.

6. The Secretary of State warned Mr Hume of the dangers of triumphalism on the part of the SDLP in present circumstances; in particular some people were representing the SDLP's position as one of having achieved all that they wanted in the Agreement and now not being prepared to work on making progress within Northern Ireland. Mr Hume firmly rejected any suggestion that the SDLP had taken this line but understood the point. He said that he was under pressure from party members to take a stronger line in selling the Agreement in order to hold off the PSF challenge; they wanted to make a great deal of this being the first time that HMG had accepted that the Republic had a role in Northern Ireland. Mr Hume was continuing to resist such pressures because of his concern not to stir up the Unionist population.

7. On the forthcoming by-elections, decisions would be taken on which seats the SDLP would contest at an Executive Committee meeting of the party tonight. Mr Hume expected SDLP candidates to stand in Mid Ulster, Fermanagh and South Tyrone, South Down, Newry and Armagh and any other constituencies where PSF stood. He confidently expected to win Newry and Armagh.

8. Mr Hume said that PIRA were very confused on how to respond to the Agreement. It was significant that they had taken the virtually unprecedented step after the Ballygawley bombing of issuing a statement to the effect that the attack was not intended as an attack on the Agreement. He asked the Secretary of State how many

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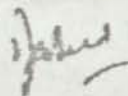
PIRA activists there were to be taken out of circulation; the Secretary of State gave an estimate of 200-300. Mr Hume said that he would be appearing on Spotlight with Gerry Adams tonight.

9. Mr Hume suggested that it would be a good idea for some members of the Catholic community, perhaps churchmen, to be invited to see the Prime Minister. It was agreed that he would give this further thought and get in touch. (I should be grateful if Mr McConnell would follow up with Mr Hume and advise).

10. In a brief discussion on the McBride principles, Mr Hume said that he would be visiting the US on 15 January and would take the opportunity again to speak out against them. It would be better if he did this off his own bat and not with any assistance from HMG.

11. The tone of the meeting was friendly and constructive.

12. This note is not to be further copied or distributed without reference to me.



J A DANIELL  
Private Secretary

19 December 1985

cc:-PS/Secretary of State(L&B)-m  
PS/Ministers(L)  
PS/PUS(L&B)-m  
Mr Bloomfield-m  
Mr Stephens-m  
Mr Brennan

Mr Chesterton  
Mr Gilliland-m  
Mr Ferneyhough-m  
Mr Elliott(PAS)-m  
Miss Elliott  
Mr Bell

Mr McConnell-m  
Mr Ehrman