

R E S T R I C T E D

1715  
*a New Staff*

529/5

FROM: PS/PUS  
16 MAY 1991

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CENT SEC

805

- cc. PS/Paymaster General (L&B) - B
- PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Pilling - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Wood (L&B) - B
- Mr McNeill - B
- Mr D J R Hill - B
- Mr Cooke - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Pope - B
- Mr Archer, RID, FCO - B
- HMA Dublin - B

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) - B

CONVERSATION WITH JOHN HUME MP: 16 MAY 1991

John Hume phoned the PUS at 0935 this morning to make clear his considerable concern about the events of the previous 24 hours.

2. His concern was based on television reports of what Dr Paisley had said after the meeting with the Prime Minister, which he felt was no advance on the statement made by the Unionist leaders before they left for London yesterday morning.

3. Hume particularly emphasised the fact that the Unionists were not committing themselves to Strand Two of the talks but only to the internal dimension, which seemed to be a reversion to their position of 2 years ago. He was concerned that once Strand One had concluded there would be further rows on the venue and standing orders to be used. The PUS took his concern on board, but said that the Unionists had not envisaged standing orders being a problem at the meeting with the Prime Minister the day before. The Prime Minister had also explicitly said that the talks were not a one strand exercise.

4. On the question of the independent chairman, the PUS reported that Dr Paisley had by no means ruled out the continuation of the Unionist parties in Strand Two talks even if they did not agree with the name which was proposed. Indeed they had implied that they would continue with Strand Two.

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5. Hume also expressed concern that the Unionist leaders had used the opportunity to see the Prime Minister both to get excessive publicity and make it seem as if they were the leaders in Northern Ireland who mattered. Additionally he was concerned at the possible diminution of the authority of the Secretary of State as a result of the Unionists having gone over his head. The PUS explained that it had come out very clearly that the Unionists could not hope to see the Prime Minister on every issue about which they were concerned. They had chosen to play their card at this point, and it could not continually be replayed in future.

6. In the brief conversation with the PUS, Hume reported that he was still feeling unwell, and was phoning from his bed. He made no mention of refusing to participate in the talks process as a result of what the Unionists had said after the meeting with the Prime Minister, but was clearly concerned at the way in which the business had been handled.

Signed:

PETER MAY  
PS/PUS  
16 MAY 1991

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