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FROM: D BROOKER
CPL DIVISION
17 NOVEMBER 1994

ENTERED 24 NOV 1994

- cc PS/PUS(L+B) -B
- PS/Mr Fell -B
- Mr Thomas -B
- Mr Spence
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Williams
- Mr Blackwell
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Thompson, Estabs
- Mr Beeton -B
- Mr Campton

ASST
SEC 18 NOV 1994
ASST

277696/11

971/11
Mrs Ken

1. Mr [redacted]
2. Mr Brown.

Mr Kyle -B

EXPLORATORY DIALOGUE: VENUES - PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

820
14.11

As you have been asked to prepare advice on possible venues for exploratory dialogue, you will be interested in the outcome of a meeting chaired by Mr Fell yesterday afternoon. The meeting had been called to consider a conflict between advice from DOE(NI) that Parliament Buildings is in need of urgent maintenance work, which could require it to be taken out of commission for up to 3 years, and the possibility or probability that it may be required for an Assembly, or talks leading to an Assembly, during the same period. As part of the discussion the issue of the possible use of Parliament Buildings as a venue for exploratory dialogue also came up.

2. It was the unanimous view that, in terms of the current state of the building, there was nothing to prevent it from being used for exploratory dialogue before the year is out. There is renovation work going on in the building and so there would need to be some tidying up, etc, but all the facilities for exploratory dialogue are there in situ. One possibility would be to use the suite of rooms on the first floor at the rear which was set aside for the Irish Government during the 1992 Talks; all the furniture and carpets are

in place. As an alternative it would be possible to use Room 17 on the ground floor plus the adjoining suites previously set aside for Sir Ninian Stephen and the Alliance Party; again, all the furniture, etc, remains in situ. Whichever location is used it would probably be sensible to use the main door, at the front of the building, as the point of entry with the road in front of the building closed off as it was during the 1991 and 1992 Talks. Both sets of rooms could easily be cordoned off and whereas the first floor suite has the merit of being above ground level and thus well away from prying eyes, Room 17 has the advantage that Sinn Fein would not have to march through the main hall, with all its historical trappings.

3. It is clear from yesterday's meeting, therefore, that you can confidently add Parliament Buildings to the list of venues available for exploratory dialogue. Ultimately the final choice will, of course, turn not only on the issues of the facilities on offer, security considerations, etc, but also on the political significance of the different venues. That case remains to be argued.

4. Mr Spence also helpfully agreed at yesterday's meeting that Mr Campton can continue to take an interest in the use of Parliament Buildings or other venues for political Talks and an Assembly. If it is eventually decided that Parliament Buildings should be used for exploratory dialogue there will be very little time to put the practical arrangements in hand and I am sure that Mr Campton's knowledge of the building and his well-established contacts with the RUC, DFP, etc would be valuable for ensuring that the wheels turn quickly. It might be sensible, however, to have a member of staff devoted to the arrangements full time, at least in the first instance. Clive Barbour, Rosemary Brown and Mark McGuicken all spring to mind as highly competent individuals who know the system at Parliament Buildings, having worked on the earlier Talks. Even though there are rooms more or less ready to be occupied someone would need to sit down with the RUC to go through the detail of the security arrangements (both inside and outside the building, to

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negotiate with DFP on the use of messengers to control access points, to negotiate with Works Service to ensure that any hammering and banging resulting from continuing maintenance work was kept to a minimum in the relevant parts of the building during meetings, etc, and to ensure that telephones, typing, photocopying and catering facilities were all properly in place. It might be necessary to have a typist/PS on hand. Any of the above individuals, operating under Mr Campton's overall direction, would I am sure would do an admirable job.

5. The only caveat on Parliament Buildings is that it may cease to be satisfactory as a venue for dialogue if Ministers decide that additional renovation work should go ahead next year. As I understand it, however, this would be unlikely to begin before Easter by which time we might reasonably hope that exploratory dialogue will have run its course.

(Signed)

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