

To return to Alderdice  
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[Signature]

HEAD OF THE N.I.  
23 JUL 1998  
10  
CIVIL SERVICE

26: 451  
(SF) Lord Alderdice

FROM: D J R HILL  
Constitutional & Political Division  
23 July 1998

B/F

cc: see list below

[Signatures]  
14/8 4/9

FILE NOTE

MR MURPHY'S MEETING WITH LORD ALDERDICE, 22 JULY

Mr Murphy and I met Lord Alderdice and Nial Johnston for 45 minutes yesterday afternoon at 11 Millbank.

2. Lord Alderdice was very interested in the implications of President Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland on 4 September. He operated on the assumption that the President would wish to address the Assembly and that the parties in the Assembly would want him to do so; and that the risk of a DUP stunt was small and could be handled. His main concern was over whether the Assembly chamber would be ready in time, or whether the event would need to take place in the central Hall. Action: Mr Watkins/Mrs Brown, Political Directorate - we need to decide whether the idea of a Presidential address to the Assembly is at all a good idea. It might look a little odd for the first meeting of the Assembly at Parliament Buildings to be one specially convened in order to be addressed by the President of the United States. The parties, especially the UUP, may have decided views on the point. If the idea were thought to be worth pursuing, it would be for the Secretary of State formally to specify that the Assembly should meet at the relevant time and place.

3. Lord Alderdice seemed generally content that various practical matters connected with the Assembly's move to Parliament Buildings AND preparations for its next meeting were in hand. A lot of work remained to be done, however, in obtaining and training staff and beginning to develop agreed working practices. Three specific points:

- he, like the Minister, remained very concerned about the McMillan contract and would find it helpful to have a clear understanding of the legal position and the possible options. Action: Mr McCusker/Mr Carson to submit comprehensive advice to Mr Murphy
- the Committee to advise the Presiding Officer had agreed that at its next meeting the Assembly should consider a motion to establish a "shadow" Assembly Commission so that it can be involved in making necessary preparations in the period before the transfer of powers. Action: Mrs Angus, Mr Carson, Bill Team, HOLAB it will be necessary to ensure that any motion to that effect is consistent with the proposals reflected in clause 32 of the Bill; and that the transitional provisions in Schedule 14 enable the shadow Commission to move seamlessly into substantive existence at the relevant point (which I

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suppose might be soon after Royal Assent, not necessarily on the appointed day)

- party support grants. This was an urgent issue for most of the parties and Lord Alderdice was pleased to hear that consideration was being given to increasing the proposed grant. The Committee to advise the Presiding Officer had asked that any letters to party leaders about this should be copied to party whips, and to the Presiding Officer. Action: PS/Mr Murphy and Mr Carson, to ensure that an early decision is reached (before Mr Murphy's holiday) and communicated accordingly.

4. Lord Alderdice reported that the Standing Orders Committee had again failed to agree on a chair. Dr Paisley had withdrawn as a candidate in favour of Fred Cobain (UUP), but the Committee had again drawn - this time 9:9 - in choosing between him and Denis Haughey. (Lord Alderdice thought the Alliance party had been foolish not to back Dr Paisley's candidacy.) He hoped the Committee would begin to consider the substantive issues, on the basis of the 1973 Standing Orders. Mr Murphy and I noted that the Government would be consulting the Committee shortly on additional Standing Orders covering the application of the D'Hondt procedure etc.

Signed: David Hill

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