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FROM: J JOHNSTON  
Constitutional & Political Division  
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JM  
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Folder for Meetings  
C026  
25 AUG 1998  
366  
MURPHY  
MALLON  
CIVIL SERVICE

cc See Attached List

**NOTE FOR THE RECORD**

**MR MURPHY'S MEETING WITH SEAMUS MALLON: 21 AUGUST 1998**

Mr Murphy, Mr Semple and I met Mr Mallon for 45 minutes on Friday afternoon to touch base on a range of issues related to the Assembly and the response to the Omagh Bomb. Mr Beattie from the Deputy First Minister's (designate) office was also present.

Mr Murphy opened by clearing up a misunderstanding over the separate meetings which had been arranged between himself and Mr Trimble and Mr Mallon. The Minister explained that the purpose of the meetings had been to cover issues from the perspective of their respective parties rather than First Minister and Deputy First Minister. Mr Mallon expressed concern that the joint relationship ("jointery") between the office of the First and Deputy First Ministers could become fragmented. He would strongly oppose, to the point of resignation, any attempt to dilute the concept of "jointery" in the Bill or in practice. Mr Murphy acknowledged Mr Mallon's concerns.

Mr Murphy enquired as to what progress had been made by the First and Deputy First Minister in moving forward on those issues which the Assembly had asked them to report on for 14 September. Mr Mallon replied that Mr Semple had given him a very good and detailed paper on the possible structures for the centre of government in the devolved administration which he was considering. Consideration of other matters had been delayed because his time had been diverted to dealing with other problems such as Drumcree. He then moved to the issue of the staffing of his private office and expressed concern that the staffing put in place during the shadow period would become permanent. He wished to get to the stage where he can effectively carry out his role and in that respect he had no problem working with the NICS. His immediate difficulty was with inadequate support in handling the media. He understood and appreciated the support which the GIS would be able to provide him but he needed more than that. He needed someone with a media background who understands the media and would be able to write speeches for him. Such an appointment would be in addition to his current allocation of special advisers. Mr Semple undertook to discuss these points with Mr Mallon following the meeting.

Funding for Party Support

Mr Murphy said that he would have a further discussion with either Mr Mallon or Mr Hume on the funding of party support in the Assembly as he was concerned that the recent letter from the Secretary of State to parties did not fully reflect the arrangements which he had discussed with the parties before the Parliamentary recess.

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Northern Ireland Bill

Mr Murphy suggested that he and the parties should meet in mid-September to discuss outstanding issues related to the Bill. There would be a need to set aside sufficient time for detailed discussions of possible amendments in the Lords. Mr Mallon agreed but returned to the issue of "jointery" arguing for a trilateral between himself, Mr Trimble and Mr Murphy. He emphasised that "jointery" had been resolved in the Agreement and he was against any attempt to unravel it in the Bill. Mr Murphy replied that he had no problem with meeting the First and Deputy First Ministers in trilateral format and separately as party leaders/representatives.

Prime Minister's Visit

Mr Murphy said that it was likely that the Prime Minister would meet Mr Mallon during his visit on Tuesday. Returning to the issue of "jointery" Mr Mallon said that he wanted to make it clear that he would have a problem with any meeting between the Prime Minister and the UUP under the guise of the First Minister's office.

Recall of the Assembly/Parliament

Mr Mallon advised that he and Mr Trimble had jointly met Lord Alderdice to register their opposition to recalling the Assembly because of sensitivity in Omagh. In his view Parliament should only be recalled if it was necessary in order to put through primary legislation. With regard to the reintroduction of internment, he thought that such a move would be politically inept because it would send the signal that other proposed changes to legislation were inadequate to deal with the security problem. He thought that the community was very volatile and elements might swing back to support violence if they were presented with the emotional issue of internment.

President Clinton's Visit

Mr Mallon emphasised that President Clinton should visit Armagh as well as Omagh.

Signed: Jackie Johnston

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