

MINUTES OF MINISTERIAL MEETING HELD ON 16 AUGUST 1999

Present: Secretary of State
 Mr Ingram
 Mr Howarth
 Mr Semple
 Mr Watkins
 Mr Maccabe

Ms Dodd
 Mr Crawford
 Mr McKervill
 Mrs Flanagan

Apologies: Lord Dubs
 Mr McFall
 Mr Pilling
 Mr McCusker

**Wider Government Issues**

1. None.

Departmental Ministerial ReportsMr Ingram

2. The Minister reported that the Drugs Strategy Paper would be issued the following day. He has already written to party leaders advising them.
3. The Minister also said that the July Monitoring Round would throw up a number of issues for decision.

Mr Howarth

4. The Minister reported that he had spent time meeting the parties and that the DUP had walked out because of the delay in the start of their meeting.

NIO/NI Departments Update

5. Mr Semple said that some SDLP Assembly Members (backbenchers) had suggested that another transition programme should be held for Assembly Members. The Secretary of State said that she would only be prepared to agree to this if it could be used

as a means to lever political progress. Mr Semple agreed to bring forward some ideas.

Information

6. Ms Dodd reported that the major issue continued to be the state of the ceasefires. The Secretary of State said that a line to take could be decided after the SPM meeting that afternoon.

Security Issues

7. Mr Watkins reported on the parades situation over the weekend. Only 3 out of 66 marches had had difficulties - Lower Ormeau, Derry and Lurgan. He and Mr Leach would be discussing with the Chief Constable and the GOC allegations that the RUC had over-reacted on the Lower Ormeau. They would also be talking to the Irish the following day.
8. On Drumcree, Mr Watkins reported that a number of meetings had been arranged for this week. Peter Quinn would be meeting Mr Ingram and Mr Howarth on Wednesday; Orange Order representatives would meet Ministers on Friday. The Residents were playing hard to get and refusing any meeting until they had met the Prime Minister. The Secretary of State said that a letter should go to No 10 asking the Prime Minister to phone Breandan MacCionnaith to try to pressure the Residents to re-engage in the process. She also said that an offer should be made to the Residents of a meeting with her and Mr Howarth. If this was accepted the Orange could be offered the same.
9. Mr Watkins reported that 2 bodies had been found that morning in Dundalk and at Dublin Airport. The circumstances were not yet known, but there was no suggestion that they were related to the Disappeared.

Patten Report

10. It was agreed that it would be essential to obtain a copy of the Patten Report 2 days before its publication on 9 September. The Report is understood to be at the printers at present. The Irish would be given a copy of the report and a meeting held with them in the evening of 7 September. The Americans would also need to be engaged. On 8 September the parties would be briefing in broad principles, as would others who would be likely to speak out in support and George Mitchell. Contact with the media would be required and the Secretary of State would speak to Maurice Hayes. All Ministers would need to be in Northern Ireland during those

days. Arrangements would need to be made to ensure that the process could be brought forward in the event that the document was leaked before 9 September.

Political Update

11. Mr Maccabe reported that there was not much activity and that all parties were looking to us for ideas for the Review. He also reported that the UUP (Ken Maginnis) had taken a low key line over the ceasefires with a view to keeping Sinn Fein in the process and letting them show themselves in their "true light".
12. The Secretary of State said that she thought Mr Stephens' paper on the review options was very useful.

Any other business

13. Mr Ingram would represent the Government at Paddy Devlin's funeral.
14. The Secretary of State said that it was important that Northern Ireland Ministers should be seen throughout the Labour Party Conference, and asked that arrangements be made.
15. The Secretary of State said that Ministers' diaries should be kept free around 1 September to enable them to attend the launch of the Northern Ireland Millennium celebrations and associated events. Plans would also need to be made for the Millennium celebrations at the end of the year.
16. The Secretary of State asked Mr McKervill to circulate for discussion after the next Ministerial meeting a proposal that the Monday lunchtime meetings between Ministers and Civil Servants should continue, that there should be a Ministerial drink or dinner on Monday evenings and that before Cabinet, once a fortnight, the Secretary of State would have breakfast with Helen Jackson and other Ministers and PPSs who wished to attend. Nigel Warner would be asked to do minutes of the Ministerial meetings.
17. Mr Semple reported that his attendance at the Omagh bomb commemoration in Buncrana as the Secretary of State's representative had been greatly appreciated.

Date of the next meeting

18. The next Ministerial meeting will be held in the VCR on Monday
23 August at 1pm.

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