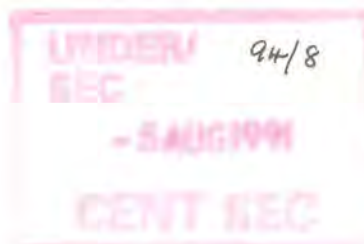


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PAB/7295/WKL/RG

FROM: W K LINDSAY, PAB
DATE: 1 AUGUST 1991



NOTE FOR INFORMATION

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
PS/Minister of State (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Mr Fell - B *cc Mr. Hamilton*
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Alston - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr DJR Hill - B
Mr Dodds - B
Mr McNeill

CONVERSATION WITH ULSTER UNIONIST PARTY GENERAL SECRETARY

1. I had lunch with Mr Jim Wilson, Secretary and Chief Executive of the UUP, this week. This was our first contact since 3 July.

The Dungannon Speech

2. Wilson had obtained his copy of the speech only a few hours before we met and had just been able to have a brief word with Mr Molyneaux about it. However, he did say that his initial impression was that it was much too light on the constitutional status and heavily weighted in favour of the Agreement and appeasing the Dublin Government. Mr Molyneaux he thought would be disappointed in the fact that the speech seemed to rule out further integration with Great Britain. I suggested that he may need to read it again more closely to see the value of the constitutional guarantee and the cogency of the realities as stated and we would then be glad to receive any further comments he had on it.

The Talks

3. Wilson said the Talks had not been a pleasant experience for either Unionist Party and had particularly exposed a great division within the DUP over the role of the Dublin Government and whether the Party should contemplate talking to them at all. He recounted

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hearing of tremendous rows going on in the DUP delegation rooms presumably between the McCrea/Vitty faction and the Robinson/Wilson grouping. There had been faults on all sides in the Talks Process, he said and cited some of the shortcomings on the Government side as:-

- In terms of logistics, equipment and administrative arrangements the Government were not ready;
- there was a great deal of uncertainty about when meetings would be held with the delegations sitting around growing more and more impatient for hours on end;
- issues such as venue and chairman should have been sorted out before the Talks began;
- there appeared to be a lack of will to facilitate progress in the latter stages of the Talks by not putting off the IGC and declaring a period of "injury time".

4. According to Wilson, Mr Molyneaux had not enjoyed one minute of the Talks, was very uncomfortable and believed that he had been vindicated in his declaration that a high wire act would not succeed. His policy remained one of slow, steady progress building up relationships and trust before embarking on any initiative. Wilson was quite emphatic that Talks would not resume in the same format, that he (Wilson) would not be based at Stormont if they did and that the Teams should be much smaller next time around. He said that a completely new basis for Talks would have to be negotiated between the two leaders and the Secretary of State and they would be looking for an open-ended arrangement rather than the restrictive gap between conferences which obtained in the first round.

5. On the Agreement he said that the prospect of negotiating it away would prove more difficult than they thought. When I suggested that the Agreement may not be as reprehensible to the general public

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as was proclaimed by unionist politicians, he agreed and said that the main problem with it was that Unionists were not consulted originally and have not got any input into it now. On the scope of work of the Conferences which now cover areas such as health, education and so on he said that he had no objection to that because these were areas which any locally based administration would want to talk to Dublin about anyway. In this regard he said that Unionists would accept co-operation with Dublin but not their interference.

6. On relationships within the Party Wilson said that Mr Molyneaux was still firmly in control, that the bulk of the Parliamentary Party was behind him and only people like Maginnis and Trimble in the Parliamentary Party, together with Empey and McGimpsey wanted to go back to the Talks Process. However, none of these four, according to Wilson, had enough support to carry the Party against Mr Molyneaux, nor apparently wanted to do so.

7. On a positive note Wilson said that in the latter stages of the Talks there had been more informal contact with Nationalist politicians and this had generally been welcomed by his delegation. He had personally appreciated and benefited from some conversations with John Hume and suggested that this type of more informal contact was one way of proceeding but only if the Press were totally excluded. In his view the Press knew too much about the day to day proceedings and all Parties were guilty of leaking to some extent, though he again strongly denied that the Position Papers had been given to the Press by the UUP.

8. Wilson at one point spoke almost disrespectfully about "dyed in the wool unionists such as Molyneaux and Cunningham", who were not prepared to contemplate any change at all. While he (Wilson) saw the need for change he would support his leader and felt that the majority in the Party would do likewise. On the future, any new attempt would not be "starting from where we are now" as the Secretary of State said in his speech but going back to basics and negotiating, in Unionist terms, a less threatening framework. This is in line with what Nigel Dodds told us recently also. Wilson

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expected that this process of renegotiating the basis for Talks would take until the end of the year and by that time the prospect of an election would be looming so large people would not want to commit themselves to anything. The message which he wanted to leave with me was that the interfering influence of the Dublin Government, as seen by Unionists during the Talks, was something they would be renewing their efforts to diminish but that he felt there was a growing awareness of the need, and a desire, to do business with the SDLP.

(Signed)

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