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UNDER/ 381/9

13 SEP 1991

FROM: M RODELL
CPL Division

13 September 1991

CC PS/Paymaster General (L&B)
PS/Minister of State (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
✓ PS/Mr Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Ledlie
Mr Alston o/r
Mr Cooke
Mr Dodds
Mr D J R Hill
Mr Archer, RID FCO
HMA Dublin

1. MR BROOKER (Agreed: David Brooker 13/9/91)
2. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)

13/9
a Mr Haffigan

MEETING WITH DR ALDERDICE: 16 SEPTEMBER 1991

1. The Secretary of State is to meet Dr Alderdice in Hillsborough Castle at 7.15pm on Monday 16 September. The purpose of this meeting will be:

- to confirm that Dr Alderdice and his party are willing to take part in fresh round-table talks;
- to invite the Alliance Party leader to share any reflections he may have on the first set of talks;
- to begin to register with Dr Alderdice that progress will only be possible if the Unionists can be manoeuvred into line; and
- to debrief him on the meeting of the IGC which took place on 13 September.

Signing up the Alliance Party

2. The Secretary of State might open the meeting by saying that now that the holiday season has ended he would like to take stock of where the political process has reached and to consider how best to

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move forward. That for his own part he still believes that sufficient common ground exists to make substantial progress possible, that he detects a high degree of support for further talks from the public at large and many politicians in the four parties and that he will be making every effort to bring about fresh Talks as quickly as possible. Turning to Dr Alderdice he might then ask if the Alliance Party would be willing to take part in these fresh Talks.

3. Dr Alderdice is unlikely, in the last analysis, to refuse to agree to relaunch the Talks process, but he will almost certainly be disinclined to engage in lengthy discussions about ground rules if the Unionists attempt to set what he considers to be unreasonable preconditions. Indeed, there is some indication that he will suggest that the Secretary of State should simply identify a further 'gap' then challenge the Unionists to refuse to participate. This is certainly the line which Sean Neeson appears to be taking. Faced with such a line of argument the Secretary of State might respond by saying that he will want to hear the Unionist leaders' views at first hand before considering how the process might be taken forward but as in past, his scope for dictating the pace may be limited. Dr Paisley's statement of 6 August was self-evidently negative at face value but it might be premature to take it as the final word.

Lessons from the Talks 30 April-3 July

4. The Secretary of State might point out that he has already set out his own reflections on the last round of Talks in his speech at Dungannon; that he believes that what happened in June confirmed the validity of the analysis behind the Talks, namely that Northern Ireland's problems arise from three mutually impinging relationships, and proved that the three stranded approach is basically sound. He might then invite Dr Alderdice to share any reflections which he or his colleagues may have on the way in which the Talks were structured, on the practical arrangements or on the substance of the discussions which took place.

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The Way Forward

5. Moving on again the Secretary of State might point out that there will inevitably be a need to look again at some of the arrangements, particularly the timing of the three strands and perhaps also the size of delegations. He might candidly express the opinion that the first trick to win will be signing up the Unionist leaders to a resumption of the process. He can also ask for Dr Alderdice's own views on the Unionists leaders' positions and what it might take to get them back to the table. The Secretary of State might ask whether Dr Alderdice has himself had any contacts about new talks with the two leaders, or would envisage having any such contacts in the coming weeks. Dr Alderdice's response could be an index of his willingness to make a positive contribution towards bringing about new talks.

The IGC

If there is time at the end of the meeting the Secretary of State might like to run through the communique of the IGC on 13 September with Dr Alderdice. This would avert the need to organise a separate meeting for this purpose. SIL Division will provide a copy of the communique which can be attached to this minute on Monday morning.

Signed: Jonathan M Rodell

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