



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/100/8

**Creator(s):** Department of the Taoiseach

**Accession Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

2

PSM: PSM8: PSSG:  
Messrs. Murray, Teahon,  
Mansorh & Dalton:  
Ambassadors London &  
Washington: Joint Secretary:  
Counsellors A-1

Copy

cc Mr + Mrs + self  
Mrs W & L.

**Secure Fax: 464**

4/3 30/4

30 April 1998

No of pages including this one: 4

To: HQ  
For: Secretary Gallagher

From: Belfast  
From: Joint Secretary

25A

Tadiseach  
1.5.98

Mr W. Keenan  
SEEN BY  
TADISEACH  
Mr McLaughlin  
7.5.98

**Subj: State of the referendum campaign and other matters**

1. I had an opportunity for some conversations on the current state of the referendum campaign here and other matters at a reception which the US Consul General gave last night for Senator Mitchell.
2. The guests included Paul Murphy, the Presbyterian Moderator, Archbishop Brady, Gary McMichael, David Adams, Seamus Close, Brid Rodgers, Monica McWilliams and Hugh Casey. The UUP and Sinn Féin were not represented.
3. Paul Murphy was fairly buoyant about the campaign. While acknowledging the risk of complacency, he predicted nevertheless a decisive majority in favour of the Agreement. The British Government were anxious to avoid overt intervention in the campaign but were seeking ways of making low-key contributions through media interviews and speeches which would highlight the opportunities now available to the people of Northern Ireland. The Secretary of State's efforts with the European Union were intended to deliver the same signal.
4. Murphy had had a long conversation with David Trimble on Tuesday and had found the latter in confident mood. While the opposition from five of his MPs continued to unsettle him, he was greatly cheered by the decision of three Councils to come out in favour of the Agreement, including Lisburn (Donaldson's base). Overall, he did not seem unduly bothered by the threat represented by Donaldson.
5. Trimble mentioned that he had an understanding with Hume that the UUP and SDLP

2

would avoid making extravagant claims during the campaign which could cause difficulties for each other in either direction. Murphy asked whether there was anything Trimble would like the British Government to be doing in support of the UUP's efforts but Trimble made no requests, saying he preferred the British Government to keep a low profile in the campaign.

6. Gary McMichael, on the other hand, told me of his anxieties about the No campaign, which was having a strong impact in certain areas, and about the large number of undecided voters (estimated to be around 40% of total UUP voters - and to be tending towards a No position). He complained about a lack of cohesion among the pro-Agreement Unionist parties. He noted, for example, that, unlike the SDLP, the UUP did not seem to have a campaign director (though he spoke approvingly of the regular media appearances by Reg Empey).
7. While he was not necessarily suggesting joint campaign appearances on the lines of the No campaign, McMichael wanted to see the UUP, UDP and PUP get together as a matter of urgency to coordinate tactics behind the scenes and to agree a set of clear messages for the Unionist electorate. One of these should be the enormity of the change represented by Sinn Féin's willingness to accept partition and to enter the Assembly - a profound shift which was being lost sight of in the No campaign's scaremongering about power being shared with Adams and McGuinness.
8. As of now, the UDP, who were campaigning intensively but were hampered by lack of funding and other resources, were confined to responding in their own home base to some of the wilder charges being made about the Agreement by the No campaign. McMichael was critical of the PUP for, as he claimed, being "invisible" in the campaign so far.
9. A theme from both McMichael and Seamus Close was the extent of the financial backing available to the No campaign (from e.g. Paisley's church funds, businessmen sympathetic to the DUP and McCartney's legal earnings). In the latter respect, Michael Lavery told me that McCartney has asked a couple of sympathetic barristers to organise contributions from the Bar Library.
10. Seamus Close, Brid Rodgers, Monica McWilliams and Hugh Casey were all broadly confident about the campaign. They had no hesitation in predicting a majority for

the Yes vote, though they were a little apprehensive about the margin. The general view was that a threshold of 70% would have to be cleared if the UUP were to be in a position to demonstrate that they had a majority of Unionists on their side (a point which McCartney has been bringing up of late). There was also a consensus, however, that the No campaign may have already reached its peak. The Presbyterian Moderator, Rev. Samuel Hutchinson, spoke of the "quiet but very widespread support" for the Yes campaign which he was encountering in rural areas.

11. I made a few points to Paul Murphy about decommissioning. Recalling the terms used in the Agreement and in the Prime Minister's "letter of comfort" to Trimble, I said we presumed that any continuing efforts by the UUP to make the holding of Assembly office conditional on decommissioning would be firmly resisted by the British Government.
12. In response, Murphy said he had the impression that, while Donaldson was pursuing a legislative provision of this kind, Trimble was not pressing for this as of now (and was likely to do so only if he felt that Donaldson represented a significant threat to his position). The British expected the issue to arise when the Settlement Bill was tabled (probably towards the end of June) and amendments were being put down by the Unionists and the Conservatives. They also expected it to feature prominently in the initial meetings of the Assembly (partly because "they'll have nothing else to talk about"). Overall, Murphy indicated that the Government would be endeavouring to defuse Unionist pressure on the basis of the existing assurances about its position on decommissioning. Privately, however, he hoped very much that decommissioning would begin to happen - "they've got to start doing something ..... we can't wear Ministers in the Executive who are backed by private armies".
13. On the practical arrangements for the Assembly, Murphy said that they are considering Castle Buildings for the "shadow" meetings. As for its permanent location when it comes formally into existence, they see no alternative at the moment to Parliament Buildings. While recognising that it may have uncomfortable associations for nationalists (with the Carson statue providing a particular reminder), Murphy referred to the extensive refurbishment of the complex, which has to date cost £17million, and hoped that it would find favour eventually.
14. Finally, on his own position, he confirmed an indication we received earlier this week

4

that the future NIO Ministerial team is likely to consist of the Secretary of State, himself and Adam Ingram. His own role will be to oversee the transition from direct rule to the Assembly, providing encouragement, sorting out the inevitable teething troubles and "bedding it all down".