

File of. in London 1.7  
Our revision used.  
Brigley 196/97.  
+ variant  
29.6

**PRESS CONFERENCE BY SECRETARY OF STATE AFTER ELECTION RESULTS ANNOUNCED, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS 27 JUNE 1998**

SECRETARY OF STATE

Can I say good afternoon and thank you all very much for coming up to talk with us. I think you will have seen in the last 24 hours how important today is for Northern Ireland. I am very pleased that the results mean that we are going to have an assembly that will work. This is another vital step towards genuine peace and political stability in Northern Ireland. Following the Agreement and the Referendum the people have spoken again. They have voted now overwhelmingly for parties that support the Agreement. 75% of seats are for parties which are pro-agreement. The new Assembly in which key decisions will require cross-community support marks a new start for Northern Ireland. The Assembly will have its first meeting on Wednesday. It will meet down at Castle Buildings where the Agreement was reached on April 10. I very much hope that when it meets for the first time on Wednesday the Assembly will elect first and deputy first Ministers to steer the next phase of preparations in consultation with the other parties. After that the next steps will be to define the portfolios of Ministers in the new executive and appoint an executive committee. You will have already worked out by the \*\*\* system who the top 10 potential ministers are so it won't be difficult to distinguish who the potential executive committee members are. Over the summer we would expect to see the departments and portfolios identified so that the executive can be appointed soon after and shadow ministers can begin to develop a programme for Government and can take part in discussions with the Irish Government about north/south co-operation. Under the Agreement areas for further north/south co-operation are to be identified and agreed in a shadow north/south ministerial council by the end of October. Assembly members will also play a part in the British/Irish Council, the third of the new institutions created by the Agreement. This will bring together the two Governments and eventually representatives of all the devolved administrations, Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales, the Channel Isles and the Isle of Man. We are working towards the launch of the new council again in shadow form in the autumn. These institutions as those of you that have gone through the Good Friday Agreement and the Referendum are aware are all inter-locking and that is what the effort will be to move them all forward together during the next couple of months along with others such as the civic forum. We plan before long to introduce a major Bill in Parliament to implement the provisions of the



Agreement including the transfer of powers to the new assembly. I expect this to complete its passage sufficiently quickly for the transfer of power to take place early next year. Let me just say a word about the transitional period between now and then. We have set up a programme of seminars and workshops to help newly elected politicians and the Civil Servants get to grips with the practicalities of working together in Government. Our aim is that progressively as we approach the transfer of power we should operate in even closer consultation with locally elected representatives. These representatives can now look towards taking control of the reigns of Government in Northern Ireland. We will be working with them on for example the 25 year regional plan being prepared by the Department of Environment, the Health care review for Fitness for the Future and an updated economic development strategy designed to meet the challenges of the new Millennium. Today marks a watershed in the history of Northern Ireland. A whole generation of politicians have missed out on the chance to exercise real power. Today changes that. Now those elected to the assembly have the real prospect of taking control of the decisions which effect the day to day lives of the people who live here. In the coming months we will do everything in our power to help them achieve that end. As we move into a new phase in Northern Ireland's history we must not forget the victims of the past 30 years. We recognised that the tragedies of the past have left a legacy of deep pain and suffering. Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's report has been widely praised. I and my colleagues have accepted its recommendations. They will be the focus of Government's help for victims and their loved ones. Adam Ingram as Minister for victims will be holding a press conference on Tuesday to outline the first in a series of specific measures to support victims. All the participants in the talks made clear that the need for protection of basic human rights in Northern Ireland is crucial that is why the Agreement provides for a new Human Rights Commission. Its job will be to keep the law under review make recommendations to Government, bring court cases and assist individuals who believe that their human rights have been breached. We will be moving as quickly as possible to set up that commission and the Bill to incorporate the European Convention on Human Rights into Law here and across the UK when it is finished its path through parliament which it is now in the process of doing. We as a Government are committed to a quality of opportunity for all. This is one of the key principles underpinning the whole Agreement. Before the Agreement I issued a White Paper 'Partnership for Equality' dealing with a number of these issues. We have received well over 100 responses to that. These are presently being considered



and I will shortly be announcing the action which we intend to take as a result. On Monday in addition the British and Irish decommissioning schemes will be formally signed. This will bring the schemes into force by the end of June as we committed ourselves to do in the Agreement. On policing we have already established an independent commission under the chairmanship of Chris Patten to make recommendations to future policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. The Commission has begun its work and will make its recommendations known by next summer. In parallel there will also be a review of the criminal justice system. This is now ready to begin and will report to me no later than autumn 1999. They will be taken forward by a team of officials from the Northern Ireland Office and will include representatives of the Lord Chancellor and Attorney General. I intend that it will be wide ranging and inclusive and conducted in an open and transparent manner. The team will be assisted by a number of assessors who will provide an independent element in the review as well as expertise and credibility and who will be involved in every stage of the review process. I am announcing today the names of these independent assessors. One of the issues we are also address is the security response required for a more peaceful society. This will go forward in the weeks ahead based on the nature and assessment of the threat to people's lives from terrorism. The Northern Ireland Sentences Bill is currently before parliament. This gives effect to a scheme with appropriate safeguards for the accelerated release of prisoners affiliated to organisations that are maintaining a complete and unequivocal ceasefire. Each prisoners case will be individually considered by the sentence review board and I will shortly be announcing the composition of that body. In other words right across the board we are working to make a reality of the Agreement in an open and even handed way. As I said at the beginning of these comments today is yet another milestone, another step towards a future for Northern Ireland. A future with a fair workable and lasting accommodation between the different communities. A future in which everyone's cultural and political identity is respected. A future which offers genuine peace and prosperity. The people of Northern Ireland have now made their voice heard twice. They want the Agreement and they now want it to work. It is now up to the Northern Ireland assembly and the British and Irish Governments to work together to make the agreement and every part of it a success.

MEDIA

Can you solve the mystery of how long has this assembly has been let in for?

SOFS

Which assembly the shadow?

MEDIA

No the people who are elected.

SOFS

Four years.

MEDIA

It doesn't say that in the Agreement.

SOFS

I have always assumed 4 years.

MEDIA

Four years from now or 4 years from next February?

MR MURPHY

This is to be resolved in the settlement. But 4 years is what the length of term of the assembly will be.

MEDIA

Yes but when does the term start?

SOFS

We will put it into the settlement bill to answer your question.

MEDIA

Congratulations on having peace in Northern Ireland, it is a great result today again, all of you have done a good job. One thing worries me is the absence of the UDP from the assembly, how their prisoners will react. Is there going to be any mechanism to allow McMichael and Adams to still have a part in the political process even though they are outside the assembly?

SOFS

Can I say I would just like to acknowledge the work that Gary McMichael and David Adams have done. They were positive members of the talks team and the talks process and democracy has spoken. I am sad they are not with us but they have worked hard to get us to where we are now.

MEDIA

There will be contact in other words. There will still be a form of contact.

SOFS

I certainly will phone, I have already talked to Gary McMichael to say I am sorry he is not on and Davey Adams was not there. We phoned people, congratulated them and offered condolences to those across the board who haven't made it and there are lots of sad people who have worked very hard to make this work and won't be part of that actual assembly but there is the civic forum, which is another voice for the community across Northern Ireland to be heard and it is a time of change. They did very well in the votes they got and I am sure as a party I wish them well for the future.

MR MURPHY

I think they played an enormously important role in forging the Agreement, immensely important and as SofS has said a number of them are actually very significant members of local authorities here in Northern Ireland and I think there is really a case for seeing politics in Northern Ireland changing in the next few years and I am sure that they will be part of that change.



MEDIA

Does that mean that you have phoned Dr Paisley and Bob McCartney - what did you say to them?

SOFS

I am working down my list of people. I haven't got to Mr Paisley yet but who has talked to him this morning?

LORDS DUBS

I spoke to him about something to do with Agriculture.

SOFS

And talked a bit about the Agreement and we will get around them all. We are talking to all the parties because the nature of the announcement today is us to put in place what the Agreement dictates by certain dates and what we are showing to you today on many fronts is that all that is in process. Now of course we do that in consultation with the parties and many of them are tired, many of them are celebrating, some are nursing wounds, but we will continue to talk with everybody as we have done over the weeks and months. We are here to facilitate, progress between the parties to reach an agreement and accommodation that they can live with.

MEDIA

You say here this report will be no later than Autumn 99 does this mean we....

SOFS

Which committee are we on?

SOFS

Criminal Justice. Does this mean that we will be honoured with your presence in autumn 1999? And secondly....

SOFS

You will be honoured by my presence.....

MEDIA

Are there any Irish Government non-liaison committee, is there going to be another row about this like the Police Commission?

SOFS

When we have suggestions from the Irish, from the parties we consider them and put together what we think is a balanced committee. Whether it is one representing different communities or as in other commissions ones that the people are there for its different areas of expertise. I do not perceive as we have consulted with interested parties for there to be any difficulties. We only had trouble before they were partially leaked on one side that were there and not the other and therefore stories started that were difficult to manage. But I don't perceive any difficulties on this front. The Criminal Justice Review will take that time because as I have said it is an open transparent wide ranging consultation criminal justice system and as you know the terms of reference were set out in the Agreement and this is very broad and wide and it will take that amount of time. There are certain issues that are not devolved to the assembly which we will still deal with through the NIO Office in London and those are broad...

MR MURPHY

The Agreement makes it fairly obvious and it applies to Scotland and Wales of course that there will be SofS in the cabinet representing Northern Ireland, Wales and Scotland, to represent the views and needs of Northern Ireland in the cabinet itself. It will be a very large job of work to negotiate the block grant of course because....

SOFS

Which you will still want even if you don't have us.

MR MURPHY

So the cabinet Minister has to look after the financial side as well in addition of course there are those areas such as security and defence and other matters which will be the responsibility of the Northern Ireland Office for the time being.

MEDIA

In autumn 1999 will you still be with us?

SOFS

N Autumn 1999 means the review will finish there. What Paul has just said is there are certain areas that remain in Westminster, block grant, defence, certain equality issues, policing. Those aren't being devolved so you want the budget negotiated, you want defence, these things will still have to happen.

MEDIA

There will be a SofS but it won't necessarily be yourself?

SOFS

I don't know who it will be, it will be a decision for the crown Minister. Minister Murphy and I have worked well together and will continue to work well together what ever is said about job changes. Can I just say we would very much like to finish what we have started and get things settled but it is not for us to decide, it is up to the Prime Minister and we will do of course exactly that.

MEDIA

Will Minister Murphy's job or Lord Dub's job will they actually exist because in the Agreement there is a role specifically for the SofS as a general ambassador?

SOFS



There is no doubt that our jobs will change.

MEDIA

Just really a position \*\*\*\*

SOFS

We are clearly over staffed at the moment. We will not be over staffed for the next 6-8 months because the transitional phase is going to demand a lot of work and a lot of work that they have already done. Stuff coming through the system which is Government policy which we were elected on, which we will continue to implement and govern. There are other policy areas which we will consult with the parties as the transition develops and that consultation will increase as the period of transition goes on. So all four will be needed in the next 10 months. I don't know at what period we won't be needed but there certainly won't be jobs for all 4 of us, probably for 2, but we will deal with that in our usual fashion when we get there.

MEDIA

Are you concerned by the number of candidate elected to the anti-agreement parties like the DUP and UK Unionists and what will this mean for the assembly when it actually sits?

SOFS

No I am happy with democracy as it turns out. You live with democracy as a politician. 75% of the seats have gone to pro-Agreement parties. As I said at the beginning this result means that the people of Northern Ireland have delivered not just support for the Good Friday Agreement but support to make it work and that is the message from today and so it is a result I am pleased with.

MR MURPHY

It looks also at the moment that if we can possibly predict the final outcome which is a bit difficult but 92-93 seats have already been announced out of 108.

It seems at the moment that the unionists who are pro-agreement will have sufficient seats to be able to exercise their community voting in the assembly.

MEDIA

Will you be the last Minister of Northern Ireland?

SOFS

I will be the last SofS in the way that I presently do the job because there will be a devolved assembly. North/south ministerial council, a civic forum, the structures will change. But as Minister Murphy made clear that there are still certain aspects related to Westminster which will demand a SofS as there will Scotland and Wales, its budgets, its defence, its police, its certain equality issues. Now I don't know what the future will look like in 1 year, 2 years, 5 years but that link is very clearly there and will stay.

MEDIA

Deputy speaker, chairman, presiding officer, Wednesday what is happening? Secondly your timetable seems to be, as you said regarding shadow executive, all of that would be the context to \*\*\* there is such a battle going on out there over how quickly shadow executive comes into being and do you envisage mandatory involvement of Sinn Fein, Unionists, everybody sitting there in that shadow executive fairly quickly?

MR MURPHY

On the question of presiding officer which is effectively the speaker of the new assembly. The law at the moment lays down that the SofS will appoint after consultation with the parties which Mo and myself are currently doing and that person would be the initial presiding officer, in other words when the assembly meets on Wednesday that person obviously takes the chair.

MEDIA

Have you got somebody lined up?

MR MURPHY

We are still in the process of consultation with that so it wouldn't be right for us obviously go to details with names there. One of those elected. It is a woman or a man that is for sure. After that the second item on the agenda on Wednesday will for the assembly itself to elect its own presiding officer, it is up to them of course if they choose to vote in the person who have been appointed or chose someone else. It is a matter for the assembly.

MEDIA

This person is that someone you are going to appoint in 24-48 hours. Is that what you are saying?

SOFS

We don't know it is up to them to decide.

MR MURPHY

On the shadow executive as you know the \*\*\* procedure which the agreement laid down gives an entitlement to the parties who are successful in the elections to certain posts but the \*\*\* procedure also of course refers not just to the number but also to the port folios because you actually have to choose a rather complicated formula what particular jobs you would want in Government and so clearly there is going to be a roll for the first and deputy first Minister in the assembly to determine those port folios during the course of the next few weeks which they will have to do. And they will have to deal with that in July and August and then it will be a matter for the assembly itself and the first and deputy ministers to discuss after consultation with the leaders of the party precisely what they will be a then the procedure comes into force.

MEDIA

Will the assembly or any party in that assembly be acting \*\*\* if they block the coming into being of a shadow executive beyond a certain point, October 31 or what ever? What is the rule there? What is your interpretation?



MR MURPHY

The only date in the Agreement of course is October 31 because that refers to the north/south ministerial council and that in turn assumes a shadow authority of some sort or other in order to deal with the whole question of north south relations and that is very important. But the expectation would be that during the course of the autumn that the executive would be formed because by then the portfolios presumably would have been established. Now the agreement is clear that so far as the procedure is concerned parties will have their positions on the executive as a right according to the electoral positions but the results of course in the agreement, a pledge of office which ministers will have to sign obviously before they can become full members of it and other arrangements as well. But I think it is pretty clear in the agreement.

MEDIA

I think you were saying that there seems to be a gap between the kicking in of the shadow executive which you seem to think will be mulled over the summer and then come on the scene fairly quickly afterwards and then I get the impression that the actual inter-governmental council involving the British Isles etc that seems to be further down is that how you see it?

SOFS

All we have said that as we have said time and time again is this is a package and if you buy into one part of it, you buy into another it will not work, you cannot cherry pick. Now there are mechanisms in the Agreement to stop that happening. But you and I know that if any one party is not working the others won't be sitting there playing ball. So it is only going to work if they all put in place the bits they don't like as well as the bits they do. So that is the basic premise of how we move forward. Now in what I announce today we have tried to be as clear as we can as to when decisions will be reached and we put where we can days, dates, months, summer, autumn, when we can reach agreements. Now there are certain things that we cannot control. Parliamentary agenda for example. I mentioned the settlement bill, the prisoners sentences bill, we are trying to get those through the House as quickly as possible because we don't want legislative procedures to delay progress on the ground. Now what if you read that agreement, the statement I have just made says with all those bits we are moving in parallel. So for

example the decommissioning bill that will be signed on Monday, the mechanisms to decommissioning then has to be in place by August. There are some bits with dates on but we are determined which is why today is happening on a Saturday, is we want to get things moving so that progress works in parallel and no bit is left behind.

**MEDIA**

When does policy statement and normalisation come then which again seems to be the pre-occupation of a lot of people out there?

**SOFS**

It will come as I said if I didn't here I have said it elsewhere in a number of weeks we will get there so there is nothing hidden.

**MEDIA**

Decommissioning - you are signing the bill - will the assembly be asked to rubber stamp the decommissioning bill and or will individual parties be asked to sign up to the decommissioning bill which is agreed by both Governments?

**MR MURPHY**

That is still going to be a matter for the settlement bill in the precise relationship between those things and that will be as I say before the House of Commons in July on that sort of detail.

**MEDIA**

There are reports coming in of trouble in Whiterock at an Orange Parade with nationalist protesters clashing with police. Can I just have your reaction to that?

**SOFS**

My reaction is I am very very depressed and disappointed that people have taken to the streets at Whiterock. I hope that it stops and I call upon those that have just been elected to do all they can to encourage people not to take to

the streets because our experience in the past has been within these kind of situations it is usually the RUC that get caught in the middle.

#### MEDIA

It doesn't look well for Monday when the decision is made on Drumcree?

#### SOFS

All I would say is that up to now, up to Whiterock we have had rather a good record of reasonable behaviour and good accommodation between the different sides and what I think what I would say as a response to Whiterock is that I hope that all party leaders across the spectrum do everything within their power to be sure that we do what we can to get an agreement and the parades for the rest of the time it is for people to talk and I hope everybody with any influence does all they can to make that happen.