

RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
ON MONDAY 24 JUNE 1991

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Dr Paisley
Minister of State	Mr Close	Mr Robinson
Mr Fell	Mr Neeson	Rev McCrea
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr Campbell
Mr Thomas	Mr Dickson	Mr McClure
Mr McNeill	Mr McBride	Mr Wilson
	Mr Morrow	
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Hill	Mr Hume	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Rodell	Mr Mallon	Mr Empey
<u>Also present</u>	Mr McGrady	Mr McGimpsey
Mr Pawson	Mr Farren	Mr Allen
	Mr Feely	Mr Nicholson
	Mr Haughey	
	Dr Hendron	

A plenary meeting of Strand One of the Talks took place at Parliament Buildings between 2.15 pm and 3.50 pm on 24 June.

2. The Government Team sought clarification on a number of points in the opening statement made by the UDUP [a copy of which can be found attached to the aide memoire of the meeting held at 10.30 am on 24 June]. The main matters of discussion were as follows:

- Paragraph 16. The UDUP pointed out that whereas before the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement the number of people killed each year as a result of terrorism seemed to be declining, since that date it had risen again.
- Paragraph 21. The UDUP said that they would, at a later stage, be tabling proposals on how to build good working relations between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland in matters of mutual interest but that they did not envisage the relationship being managed by any institution.

- Paragraph 72. The UDUP said that the current mechanisms for dealing with community grievances exacerbated rather than mollified the situation because they discriminated against Protestants.
- Paragraph 75. The UDUP accepted the suggestion that the Secretary of State might have role to play in arbitrating between any future Assembly and the United Kingdom Parliament but said that what they had envisaged was that he would arbitrate where tensions existed within the new government structures in Northern Ireland, for example by determining which issues might require weighted majority support.
- Paragraph 86. The Government Team pointed out that if at the end of all three strands the final package included the repeal or amendment of Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution of the Irish Republic the Irish Government would have to hold a referendum. It was quite likely that in voting in that referendum the people of the Republic would be swayed by their judgement of the package as a whole (including Northern Ireland's internal arrangements) and not simply by arguments for or against repeal. If they refused to repeal Articles 2 and 3 the whole package would obviously fall. The UDUP said that it was unacceptable that an agreement on devolution reached among the parties should be shelved because the people of the Republic refused to endorse the repeal of Articles 2 and 3.

3. The Alliance Party were then given the opportunity to clarify their understanding of the Secretary of State's opening statement. The main points to emerge were as follows:

- Paragraph 12. The Government Team explained that they believed that all the parties were united in their commitment to democracy, to the constitutional process and to the due process of law; in the belief that

Government should strive for the common good and for equality of treatment; and in their support for an effective security policy.

- Paragraph 19. The Government Team said that although the present constitutional legislation was not necessarily a limiting factor in discussions about what powers might be devolved, the parties should understand that there were some areas where the wider interests of the United Kingdom Government as a whole might have to be taken into account in the Talks. Three such areas were identified in paragraph 25.
- Paragraph 25. The Government Team accepted the general proposition that it was not only the parties who would have to make compromises if the process was to succeed but said that they were genuinely constrained in the three areas specifically mentioned in the paragraph.
 - (1) The European Community. The Government had no wish to preclude the possibility that a future Assembly might wish to make representations to the EC but, at the same time, they were under a treaty obligation to ensure that Community law was applied in their territory.
 - (2) Financial Arrangements. So long as Northern Ireland continued to receive a subvention from the United Kingdom Consolidated Fund the Treasury would continue to have an interest in its financial affairs. The Government Team were anxious that the parties should understand that while they were quite content to discuss this issue any agreement reached would have to be approved by the United Kingdom Government as a whole.
 - (3) Security Policy. The Government Team pointed out that it was the Secretary of State for Defence and not the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

who was responsible for the Armed Forces in the province. Here again discussion was by no means ruled out but it had to be recognised that the final decision did not lie with those sitting around the table.

4. The SDLP also put a number of questions to the Government Team on the nature of the constraints mentioned in paragraph 25 and the following points were made:

The European Community. Realistic proposals such as that a future Assembly should maintain an office in Brussels, would receive careful consideration but it was simply not within the United Kingdom's gift to give Northern Ireland a thirteenth seat in the Council of Ministers.

Financial Arrangements. The Government Team emphasised that they were not ruling out the possibility that a future Assembly might have the power to raise its own revenues they were simply pointing out that the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland had no responsibility for taxation.

Security Policy. The Government Team assured the parties that they had not prejudged what could or could not be discussed but they pointed out that the Secretary of State could not unilaterally surrender powers that were not his in the first place. The Armed Forces in Northern Ireland were the responsibility of another Cabinet Minister and, under the Police Act 1970, the Chief Constable was operationally independent.

5. The UUP then proceeded to pursue their own line of questioning and the following points were made:

- Paragraph 12. The Government Team agreed that it would be highly detrimental to the Talks process to allow any groups that supported terrorism to be involved.

- Paragraph 14. The Government Team confirmed that the Talks would be looking at how the relationship between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland might be managed as a whole and not simply as it related to Northern Ireland.

- Paragraph 15. The Government Team confirmed that they were not currently considering changes to Northern Ireland legislative procedures; but nothing was ruled out and any reasonable proposal would be considered. The UUP asked the Government Team to define 'widespread support' and their understanding of what would be 'an appropriate and fair role for both sides of the community'. The Government Team declined to do so on the grounds that this would be to go into issues of substance.

- Paragraph 24. The Government Team said that as well as providing neutral background information they also intended to be an active participant in the discussions.

- Paragraph 25. The Government Team confirmed that any discussion about a Bill of Rights that would apply to the whole of the United Kingdom would obviously be constrained by wider Government interests but said that they were not opposed to such a discussion in principle.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

June 1991