

RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS ON
WEDNESDAY 26 JUNE 1991

Those present:

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Mr Robinson
Minister of State	Mr Close	Rev McCrea
Mr Fell	Mr Neeson	Mr Wilson
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr Campbell
Mr Thomas	Mr McBride	Mr Gibson
Mr McNeill	Mr Morrow	Miss Paisley
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Hill	Mr Hume	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Lindsay	Mr Mallon	Mr Maginnis
	Dr Hendron	Mr Trimble
<u>Also Present</u>	Mr Farren	Mr McGimpsey
Mr Pawson	Mr Haughey	Mr Empey
	Mr Maginnes	
	Mr Feeley	

A plenary meeting of Strand One took place in Parliament Buildings between 16.10 and 17.30 hours on Wednesday 26 June. This was a continuation of the discussion on the document "General Principles" under sub heading 19 - potential long-term security benefits of a political accommodation.

2. In terms of the security situation the UDUP said that the Government had been attempting to improve social and economic conditions over the past twenty years yet terrorism was increasing. The Anglo Irish Agreement was meant to bring peace, stability and reconciliation yet six years on it had not done that. The UDUP suggested that, if a devolved arrangement had responsibility for security and after three years the problem remained, that would undermine the devolved structure. They therefore argued that a political accommodation was a measure which would help the situation but that the real answer was more resolute action in terms of a military solution. Asked by the SDLP what was meant by a military solution, the UDUP said that they had put specific suggestions directly to the Chief Constable, senior Army personnel and the Paymaster General. The UDUP would put definite proposals on the table in due course.

3. The SDLP maintained that in certain areas such as West Belfast there were people who loathed the IRA but at the same time there was a significant section of the people who hated the Security Forces. They said that the prime reason why people, in particular the young, joined Sinn Fein was because of the treatment they received from the Security Forces. The SDLP were aware of the difficulties for young soldiers in some Nationalist areas but maintained that only a successful political initiative together with sensitive security operations would have a lasting positive effect. It was further stated by the SDLP that violence in the community was a subject which went to the heart of the Talks process. There was no point in glossing over such an important area. In any stable society security was indigenous to the community yet there were no RUC living in South Armagh, the West Bank of the Foyle or in West Belfast and had never been indigenous to the Roman Catholic community. They continued that the judicial system in Great Britain had the capacity to defend individual rights, as in the recent case of the striking miners, but the SDLP claimed that terrorism had the effect of diluting a part of the judicial system, as with the Birmingham six, Guildford Four and other cases. Agreement in the political process, based on the three relationships, would not end violence but would open up the way for lasting long-term benefits.

Desirability of a Political Consensus for Security Polices

4. It was agreed that the substance of this sub-heading (20) had been discussed extensively already. The SDLP suggested that there should be more of an imperative in the title and that desirability should be replaced by a word such as essential or necessity.

Local Input into Security Policy

5. The SDLP again maintained that identification with political institutions was crucial and the best form of identification would be that those involved would have a say in every aspect of running it. The UUP said that simply allowing local representatives to have a few seats on the Police Authority would be worse than at present. The UDUP asked whether the Government could contemplate defining a

I N C O N F I D E N C E

role for a local administration in relation to security at this early stage of discussions. The Government Team said that this was an area which went beyond the remit of a single Government Department as it included both the Northern Ireland Office and the Ministry of Defence. The Government was prepared to entertain debate on a role for local representatives within Northern Ireland but this would have to be part of an agreement which was seen to be stable, durable and commanded widespread support across the community. To a question from the SDLP about whether security meant anti-terrorist activity or normal policing the Government Team pointed out that Ministers did not control the police and operational policy was very much in the hands of the Chief Constable. This also extended to Army operations since the policy of primacy of the police was introduced in 1976.

6. The UDUP quoted from Command Paper 7950 where it stated that a local Assembly should have "a voice" in security matters. They asked if there was any change in this policy. The Government Team said that the Government was prepared to listen to and discuss a variety of options in terms of that aspect of the affairs of Northern Ireland. The SDLP, on the other hand, cautioned that a situation should not be allowed to arise where there was responsibility without authority and any meaningful debate on this subject should be subsequent to whatever consensus was possible in the Talks process. In their view the presence of the British Army meant in effect that there would be no input to security policy by any local representatives.

Individual/Minority Rights

7. Moving on to key point 22 the SDLP said there was general support within the SDLP for a Bill of Rights and welcomed the fact that all the political parties round the table had at one time similarly supported such a measure. The European Convention on Human Rights was a suitable model on which to base local proposals. Within these, the SDLP would wish to see attention given as to how minority/group rights were dealt with. The UUP agreed that there was general agreement among the parties and referred to the 1975

I N C O N F I D E N C E

Convention Report as a good starting point. They suggested that, as a considerable amount of Northern Ireland legislation was based on UK law, it might be better to have a Bill of Rights on a UK basis rather than just for Northern Ireland. They pointed out that for lawyers individual rights tended to mean Human Rights whereas group rights did not. It was important that group rights were not allowed to override individual rights.

7. The SDLP asked whether it was possible for a Bill of Rights to co-exist alongside emergency legislation. The UUP contended that any Bill of Rights had a facility for dealing with emergency legislation and pointed out that only one provision of the EPA/PTA had been found to be in breach of the ECHR.

Business Committee

8. The Government Team said that business would finish at 20.00 hours but before that the Secretary of State would seek to draw together some of the strands of the previous two days discussions. This would provide a back cloth papers which the parties and the Government would prepare for circulation on Friday (28 June). The following week would begin with consideration of these papers and an attempt to arrive at an agreed paper. Plenary sessions would run from 10.30 in the morning until 20.30 on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday and from 10.30 until 17.30 on Thursday. To a question from the UDUP the Government Team said that important discussions extending beyond strand one which had taken place during the course of the week should not be excluded from papers.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

I N C O N F I D E N C E