

RECORD OF A BILATERAL MEETING WITH THE ALLIANCE PARTY HELD IN  
PARLIAMENT BUILDING ON 20 MAY 1991

Government Team

Secretary of State  
Minister of State  
PUS  
Mr Fell  
Mr Pilling  
Mr Thomas  
Mr McNeill

Alliance Party

Dr Alderdice  
Mr Close  
Mr Neeson

Talks Secretariat

Mr D J R Hill  
Mr Lindsay

Also Present

Mr Pawson

The meeting began at 1817 hours and ended at 1835 hours.

2. The Government Team explained that during the course of the afternoon the Unionists had tabled a position paper which on the face of it appeared much clearer and more purposive than their 17 May document. The Government Team intended to draw attention to some respects in which it might be made into a fuller and more comprehensive document reflecting an agreed assessment between the Government and the Unionist delegation of the previous week's meeting at Downing Street.

3. The Alliance Party asked about the status of the document and whether it amounted to an ultimatum from the Unionists to the rest of the participants. The Government Team replied that it was not; it was a statement which sought to clarify the position. The Alliance Party reiterated their belief that the only way to secure clarification to everyone's satisfaction was for all the parties to sit around the table and discuss the paper openly. There were distinct disadvantages of continuing to work in a bilateral mode.

4. The Government Team explained that the SDLP position when faced with the Unionist position paper was that as there were still

outstanding issues to be settled before the Unionists could be expected to agree to the 14 May procedures then it was up to the Government to do this as expeditiously as possible. To that end their preferred option appeared to be that substantive talks should be postponed until that process had been completed.

5. After further discussion the Alliance Party decided not to take receipt of the Unionist paper. The Government Team confirmed that they would discuss the issues further with the Unionists the following morning. It was possible that a revised version might be available by lunchtime. If so, this would then be transmitted to the Alliance Party for consideration. The Alliance Party asked whether this revised document would replace the one of the 14th May. The Government Team confirmed its hope that any revised position paper would clarify the Unionist position on all the issues contained in the 14 May paper and record commitment to the resolution of the outstanding issues. The Alliance Party returned to the question of a round table discussion and asked if there would be a plenary session on Wednesday. The Government Team replied in the negative.

TALKS SECRETARIAT