

## MEETING OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE - TUESDAY 18 JUNE 1991

Government Team

Minister of State  
Mr Thomas

Talks Secretariat

Mr Pope

Party Representatives

Mr Close  
Mr Haughey  
Mr Robinson  
Rev Smyth

The Minister of State chaired a meeting of the Business Committee in his office at Parliament Buildings between 10.00 and 10.25 am on Tuesday 18 June.

TIMETABLE

2. The Minister of State said that he wished to review the possibility of intensifying the Strand One process by either extending the working day or by extending the working week. Three 'hard' working days might be the best way forward, leaving time available, as at present, on Thursdays and Fridays for reflection on the week's business and for preparation for the following week. He sought the views of party representatives.

3. Mr Haughey said that the SDLP delegation had discussed the issue and Mr McGrady and Mr Mallon had noted that the Parliamentary timetable on the following two Thursdays (27 June and 4 July) was imposing an extra load on them. Reverend Smyth said that the UUP had also discussed the issue and favoured a morning session from, say, 11.00 to 1.00 followed by lunch, a further session between 2.30 and 5.30, then coffee and a final, evening, session from 6.30 to 8.30. This would add extra hours to the working day while still leaving time at the end of the day for travel home and/or business. Mr Haughey felt that the question could be reviewed after the present week's business - a late night finish would pose difficulties for SDLP delegates since, as well as having to attend internal party meetings, some of them were faced with long distances to travel to and from Parliament Buildings. This already posed difficulties so

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-2-

far as a 10.30 start was concerned. Mr Robinson felt that if the present round of presentations by the parties would be protracted, then there would obviously be a need to lengthen the working day or working week. If not, then the remainder of the Strand One business could be conducted within the present timescale. He, and others, found it difficult to conduct their non-talks work in the two or three days that remained each week but he did accept that there might be a need for new arrangements.

4. The Minister of State noted that 1 July would not be a working day and agreed with Mr Robinson's suggestion that the arrangements for that week be reviewed during the course of next week. So far as business during the week beginning 24 June was concerned, it was agreed that the Business Committee should propose:-

- (a) a morning session from 10.30 to 12.45;
- (b) a lunch break from 12.45 to 14.15;
- (c) an afternoon session from 14.15 to 18.00 (with a break for coffee/tea), and
- (d) on Tuesday 25 June only an evening session from 18.30 to 20.30, with the afternoon session concluding at 17.30.

5. The arrangements for the present week would stand, with Thursday and Friday 27 and 28 June left free for informal talks-connected work and other (eg constituency) work. There was no proposal, at this stage, for evening sessions on Wednesdays.

OTHER BUSINESS

6. Mr Robinson asked about the possibility of meeting on 16 July, indicating that the UDUP delegation did want some form of meeting on that day. The Minister of State said this was an interesting suggestion!

7. Mr Haughey indicated that two of the SDLP MPs had asked for an additional room to use for constituency business. The Minister of State asked Mr Pope to take this forward with Mr Townson (NB: This request was passed to Mr Townson immediately after the meeting).

NEXT MEETING

8. The Minister of State suggested that the next meeting should be on Wednesday 26 June. He would discuss this further with the party representatives.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

18 June 1991