

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

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
ON THE MORNING OF 9 MARCH 1992

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Mr Molyneaux
Minister of State	Mr Morrow	Mr Cunningham
	Mr Neeson	Mr Nicholson
Mr Fell		
Mr Thomas	Mr Ford	Mr Empey
Mr Bell	Mrs Bell	Mr Allen
Mr Maccabe	Mr McGarry	Mr Trimble
	Mr McBride	Mr Maginnis
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	Mr Dickson	Mrs Bradford
	Mr Maguire	Mr Donaldson
Mr Lindsay	Mr Jones	Dr McGimpsey
Mr May		Rev Smyth
	<u>SDLP</u>	
<u>Also Present</u>		<u>UDUP</u>
	Mr Hume	
Mr Fittall	Mr Mallon	Dr Paisley
Mr Brooker	Mr McGrady	Mr Robinson
Mr Smith		Rev McCrea
	Mr Farren	Mr Dodds
	Mr Haughey	Mr Campbell
	Mrs Rodgers	Miss Paisley
	Dr Hendron	Mr Gibson
	Mr Feeley	Mr Vitty
	Mr Maginness	
	Mr Gallagher	
	Mr McClelland	

The first plenary meeting of the new Talks began at 10.40 and concluded at 11.30.

2. The Government Team sought agreement, which was readily given, from the Party Delegations that the number of delegates of individual parties in the Conference Room might exceed 10 on this occasion. The Government Team passed on a message from the Prime Minister expressing his gratitude to the leaders of the four Parties for following up their 11 February meeting with him in such constructive fashion. The Government Team said that it was encouraging that everyone wanted to continue political dialogue. It was agreed that the basis for the Talks remained the statement of 26 March 1991.

3. The Government Team suggested that the ground to be covered

in advance of the announcement of the election was the nature of the gap in conference meetings after the immediate post-election conference; the variations Parties would like to see to the structure of the previous Talks; whether matters of substance should be covered prior to the election or discussion of general themes should continue; future meetings that week; and what should be said to the press.

4. After discussion, the Party delegations agreed that no delegates would give press interviews about the Talks, and considered the possibility of sanctions imposed by their own party against those who broke this agreement. The UUP delegation said that the previous Talks had constituted the 'Second Reading stage' of the ground to be covered, and the process being embarked on now could be equated to the Committee stage of a Bill going through Parliament. It was clear that the Plenary Conference should be the ultimate decision-taking body, but there was a need for a Business Committee and a working committee to address Strand One issues. A plan of the committee structure they proposed was circulated (and is attached). The plan also envisaged Party Leaders being able to meet separately or with the Secretary of State to discuss matters when necessary. The UDUP delegation commented that discussions of Strands Two and Three were not appropriate at the present time, and suggested that committees or sub-committees to address these aspects ought not to be established at this point.

5. The SDLP delegation suggested the purpose of the pre-election talks was to prepare the agenda for discussion thereafter and welcomed the clear indication of intent the meeting represented. It was important not to agree structures which tended to hinder the process by being too bureaucratic. If sub-committees were to be established, then other members of the teams would need to be available in the building to sanction any agreements reached. The UUP delegation said they wanted to see Talks begin as soon as possible after the post-election Inter-Governmental Conference, and their proposals were intended to facilitate this. The UDUP delegation agreed and said they believed a smaller groups would enable speedier progress to be made.

6. The Alliance Party delegation were pleased that Talks had begun and agreed that a Business Committee with consistent membership would be useful. Rather than a Strand One committee, however, they recommended that sub-committees be established on specific issues such as finance and economy, powers to be transferred, the exercise of executive responsibility, constitutional protections and relations with bodies outside Northern Ireland such as Westminster, Republic of Ireland the EEC. The UDUP delegation said that relations with the Republic of Ireland were a Strand Two matter, and should not be addressed in Strand One. The UUP delgation said sub-committees to deal with specific points were catered for in their proposals.

7. The SDLP delegation said that a Business Committee should be established to identify an agenda for the talks. Only then would it be clear what role sub-committees could perform. The Government Team said that the exchange of views had been a valuable ground clearing exercise which would be resumed after coffee.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

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