

A PROPOSAL FOR A TRANSITIONAL EXECUTIVE

This proposal is based on a number of assumptions:

- The Agreement does not link the formation of the executive to decommissioning.
- Nevertheless, there is a growing concern in the populace and among the two governments that the slow pace of decommissioning soon may threaten the stability of Northern Ireland.
- By choosing the proposal outlined below, the elected representatives of Northern Ireland recognize that an additional six month period of transition is necessary to fulfill the next part of the Agreement. This period of transition will allow Ministers to develop familiarity with their portfolios before working together in an Executive Committee. The period of transition also allows for the acceleration of negotiations on Decommissioning. Finally, this period also will allow reports from the Commission on Policing and the Review of the Criminal Justice system to be received and acted upon.
- From a political standpoint the proposal allows the Ulster Unionist Party to not serve in an Executive Committee with Sinn Fein until decommissioning takes place. It also allows Sinn Fein to assume ministerial responsibility as outlined in the Agreement without decommissioning. For parties that are due Ministerial assignments, it allows them to take up their posts. For the smaller parties, it allows for the work of the three Strands to continue. Most importantly, if agreed to by the majority of the representatives voting on cross-community lines, the proposal avoids destabilizing the peace and prosperity that the Agreement has brought to Northern Ireland this year.

PROPOSAL

This proposal is consistent with the Agreement signed on the 10th of April 1998.

- By Friday, April 2, 1999, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will name a Transitional Executive following the rules laid out in item 16 of Strand One of the Agreement. These Ministers would not convene in Executive Committee until September 15, 1999.
- As outlined in sections 22 and 23 of Strand One of the Agreement, all Northern Ireland Departments would be headed by a Minister and all Ministers would affirm the terms of the Pledge of Office contained in Annex A.
- Ministers would have full executive authority in their respective areas of responsibility. However, instead of reporting to the Assembly or to each other in an Executive, their work would be overseen by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, who would have veto power over any decision in this six month period. In the six months of transition, the Ministers would prepare a work program for their Ministries and a budget to be presented to the Assembly.

- In this period of transition, Ministers could only be removed for failure to meet their responsibilities. They would be removed by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.
- During the period of transition, Ministers would be able to avail themselves of expertise from business and academia on public sector management. Orientation programs by Ministers holding similar portfolios in the United Kingdom and Ireland or other countries, if justified, would be provided. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland would set up a fund for travel, training and exchanges.
- In addition, Ministers would be expected to submit a written report to the Assembly on the work accomplished during their transitional mandates. An audited statement of accounts will be provided to each Minister by the Secretary of State, before the Minister takes responsibility for the Ministry.
- During this same period, the First Minister and the Deputy First Minister will continue their responsibilities, including a further elaboration of the work outlined in section 8 of Strand Two. These two Ministers will present a report September 15, 1999 on areas where co-operation and implementation for mutual benefit will take place.
- A date will be set now for the British-Irish Council to meet for the first time. That date should not be set before December 15, 1999, giving the Northern Ireland Executive at least three months to work together before the meeting date.
- The Independent International Commission on Decommissioning (IICD) would present to the Assembly on or before September 15, 1999, a detailed blueprint, including a time line by which all paramilitary arms would be decommissioned. The final date of the timeline should not exceed May 2000, the target date set for decommissioning in the Agreement. By September 15, 1999, decommissioning would have begun.
- In a parallel process, with an identical deadline, September 15, 1999 the British Government would present the Assembly with its blueprint and timeline to assure that normal security arrangements will be in place by May 2000. These provisions are laid out in the Agreement in the section on Security. ~~If the Assembly does not find this plan acceptable, it would present an alternate plan that has received a majority of votes on a cross-community basis to the British Government within thirty days. Otherwise, the British Government plan would begin to take effect.~~ HMG resp.
- In a third parallel process, drawing on the report of the Commission on Policing for Northern Ireland and the Report on Criminal Justice, the Assembly would produce by September 15, 1999 an agreed-upon blueprint and timeline for the devolution of responsibility. Devolution must take place by May 2000. ~~This legislative proposal must receive a majority of cross-community votes.~~ Sec. of State resp.