

Confidential – For talks team

A note of discussions - 28 November 2002

APNI Eileen Bell, David Ford (Stephen Farry)
NIWC Monica McWilliams, Avila Kilmurray (Chris McCartney)
PUP David ERvine, Billy Hutchinson (Winston McArthur)
SF Gerry Adams, Martin McGuinness
SDLP Mark Durkan, Brid Rodgers (Alex Atwood)
UUP Reg Empey, Michael McGimpsey
UKUP Robert McCartney, John Cobain (David Vance?)

SOS Issues for addressing are listed, aim of talks getting the institutions back up and running. This agenda is for identifying and prioritising the issues, not discussing them today. 3 weeks between now and Christmas, hope parties can proceed in bi- and tri-laterals and maybe other formats. BIC meeting on 18th November, it will agree when this body (multi-party talks) will meet again. Go around the table on principles of discussion.

APNI Some issues will need teased out in detailed discussion. Should spend the time before Xmas doing that, then come back after Xmas to get down to resolving the issues. Smaller formats could be useful. Implementation group should have a role also. (SOS comments: govts will talk about the role of Implementation group in next couple of weeks)

NIWC Concern about dealing with substantive issues after Xmas – urgent time scale. Need systematic approach – bi- and tri-laterals already going on, what we need is a framework for having talks. (SOS – see parties working on the substantive issues in smaller formats in the coming three weeks)

PUP Don't agree with the proposed format, bi- and tri-laterals are exclusive and behind closed doors. No accountability.

SF Agree with conditions. We need to work with what works. They've been encouraging bi-laterals by their Assembly team. Want to know what the UK govt is going to do – they have responsibilities too. Fear that these talks are a holding operation. (SOS – no intention of excluding anyone, ready to talk to any party at any time, not a holding operation).

SDLP A Conditional yes to format. Maybe the 2 govts could meet parties together, so we come to the roundtable with their positions already stated, and can get on with the discussion. Worries about no roundtable before 18th or Christmas. Maybe a working or steering group might safeguard against drift. (SOS time constraint on creating a big architecture of talks.) SDLP also aware of PUP concerns.

UUP This agenda looks like Castle buildings talks, but already had negotiations on those issues. The agenda is not acceptable, because there is only one reason for crisis and

suspension – paramilitary activities. The issues listed are not on a par. UUP not getting involved in them. Quote PM – no more bit by bit negotiations. The Agreement is already there. The other issues are diluting the real issue. No differentiation made between issues in different strands.

Another concern – North-South institutions. NSMC should be suspended, implementation bodies should have agreed budgets and plans so can go on. Seek clarification on what the Irish govt has done. Hear PUP concerns about exclusion, shouldn't happen again.

(SOS see item A as central on the agenda. Implementation bodies a question of care and maintenance, making sure staff and work can continue.)

UKUP Increasing majority of people disagree with the principles of the Agreement. Share SF's questions over the validity of suspension. RoI is hypocritical in saving North-South bodies. There's been a treaty between UK and Irish govts. And no-one knows about it. This review should have decided on that issue, rather than a unilateral decision.

Will treat SF as democrats if they become democrats. This review should only concern decommissioning and paramilitary activity. No Weston Park Mark II, that was a fudge. (Cowan replies – no conspiracy theory. Implementation bodies an issue of practicality. Everyone round the table trying to get institutions up and running. Need to find enabling context to allow decommissioning to happen etc, hence other issues on the table. Not suggesting that the issues should be dealt with on the same basis. GFA talks about cultural and language issues, so should be dealt with. From one point of view, there is only one issue on the agenda, but from other points, there are other issues not dealt with. Not only unionists want to see an end of paramilitaries. Everything else is not a 'concessionary agenda', for example equality offers guarantees for all.

(More discussion about NSMC and Implementation bodies ensued. Then came back to agenda)

Mark Durkan On the issue of the agenda, let's be clear that the governments are doing what we asked of them last week – to gather all the issues we gave them.

Reg Empey But other issues are agreed, there is no argument. Maybe issues of implementation. Have to take very great care over Implementation bodies. Before devolution 164 pieces of cross-border co-operation between RoI and UK govts.

NIWC The point of the Agreement is not just about addressing violence, but the causes of conflict. Part A of the agenda is not separate from other issues such as human rights and policing further down the agenda.

APNI Items listed are relevant for discussion. Agenda needs to be comprehensive (paragraph 8 review). See the points on the agenda as inclusive (so issues like voting systems are under the workings of the institutions etc.) Why is the operation

of the Human Rights Commission specified? Reconciliations should be community relations. Down the page – descending order of importance. APNI see three areas, issues relating to suspension, issues relating to the operating of the institutions, wider implementation issues.

NIWC On E, want to separate reconciliation and victims issues. Urgency is moving on the agenda, questions about how it might work. Anxious about working groups. Maybe decommissioning, policing and demil as one group. A second on institutions and a third on rights, safeguards and equality of opportunity.

PUP Sympathetic to the view about dealing with paramilitarism separately, but connected to the other issues. Smell a rat on some agenda items. Loose agenda, could include almost anything. Reminder that Weston Park was never discussed or agreed.

Martin, SF (preamble – restated position)

NO way we can just address the issue of armed groups. Going to have devise a mechanism to deal with all the issues, in whatever way works. Hear the concerns of smaller parties about being excluded, other parties and govts must take that on board. Resolving these difficulties is not beyond us. Have to deal with armed groups, but other issues also.

SDLP Agenda covers all the issue. Agree that reconciliation should be split. Agree to equality of opportunity being included as a separate issue. The agenda is only stating the issues, we've had plenty of broad agendas, need to break it down. Agree with the importance of inclusivity, discussions can take place, but everyone should know about it. Can't deal with all issues in roundtable, or we'll get nowhere. All issues are not the same. Need a reliable, stable outcome – a document or position that covers all the issues. We are dealing with issues that are in the Agreement, some that need to be looked at again. There can be no private deals. Working groups to look at agenda.

Michael, UUP Sense of déjà vu! Already have an implementation committee and bilaterals. UUP agreed to meet this week if there was an agreed agenda, didn't like what they saw. Parades not on it. Been around and around these issues for 4 years, or 6 ½. The big problem is paramilitarism, especially Sinn Fein. UUP have provided the time, time was squandered. All the incidents we have problems with occurred since the Agreement, not a transition. One key issue, can talk about the rest in a different format. There is no indication SF are leaving behind violence. Unless we tackle the issue of paramilitarism, we're going round and round again. Need disclosure. UUP "have given them the chance." Unionists supported the GFA because if it meant what it said, it was worth it, if it could achieve what it said it would. Agreement also says exclusion from office if parties are involved in violence. SF have been able to solve the prolme for us for a long time and have shown little interest.

UKUP Quoted Downing Street Declaration – only those committed to exclusively peaceful means can be involved. Forgotten. All other issues on this agenda have an

intrinsic worth, but won't be dealt with unless the paramilitarism is dealt with. Opposed to D'hondt.

SF Refutes that there are terrorists in government, refutes that Sinn Fein have been involved in acts of violence. Equality of opportunity about young nationalists and young loyalists. Need to return to the issue of a holding exercise.

Cowen Not a holding exercise, we've a job of work to be done. The last 4 ½ years have not be squandered. Govts here to spell out what needs to be done in implementation. Equality is the means by which we get stability, not subservient to it. Everyone, including the PUP have to take ownership, GFA helping to address social and economic issues of their community. Have to recognise the liberating effect of getting rid of paramilitarism from this society. Issues haven't be implemented to the satisfaction of everyone – that's why they're on the agenda people need to be convinced if certain things happen, other things will happen. Need to think about what a post-paramilitary reality looks like in all terams?

Reg, UUP (disagreement with Sinn Fein) Not about to start renegotiating the other issues.

Gerry There have been huge improvements. What about the anti-agreement groups? Can't blame us for their violence

SOS Hope we'll talk about these issues and details in bi and trilaterals. Have to talk about Implementation Group's role etc. Everything up for discussion, but some issues more crucial to getting institutions further along. Will be in touch with the parties in the next few days. Discussions will take place before or after the BIC on 18th December.

Chris McCartney
3 December 2002