

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS  
ON THE AFTERNOON OF 5 MAY 1992

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Hanley	Mr Close	Mr Cunningham
PUS	Mr Morrow	Mr Empey
Mr Fell		
Mr Thomas	Mrs Bell	Mrs Bradford
Mr Bell	Mr McBride	Mr Allen
Mr Maccabe	Mr Ford	Mr Donaldson
Mr Hill		Mr Nicholson
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Mr Brooker	Mr Hume	Dr Paisley
Mr May	Mr McGrady	Mr Robinson
	Mr Haughey	Rev McCrea
<u>Also Present</u>	Mr Feeley	Mr Campbell
Mr Smith	Mr Gallagher	Mr Vitty
Mr Fittall	Mr Farren	Mr Gibson

The meeting began at 14.37 am and concluded at 16.20 pm.

2. The Government Team explained that the delay in reconvening the Plenary Session had allowed them to produce a first draft of a paper drawing together common principles based on the Parties' submissions presented during the morning session. The whole of the Plenary Session was spent discussing the document, a copy of which is attached at Annex A. The UDUP delegation suggested the principles agreed be regarded as guidelines for future discussions rather than exact prescriptions all of which would need to be rigidly incorporated in any new institutions.

3. Most points were agreed with little or no discussion. There were, however, a number of longer exchanges which covered the following points.

- The Alliance Party delegation asked that principle 2(b) refer not merely to two bodies of opinion but be broadened to cover other groups who would not feel entirely

comfortable in either tradition. The other Party delegations suggested that, whilst other groupings existed, the principle covered by 2(b) was valid as the problems facing Northern Ireland concerned the division between the 'main parts of the Northern Ireland community'. After discussion, the Secretary of State proposed an addition to cover the Alliance Party's point and this was accepted by all delegations.

- In discussion of principle 2(f), the DUP delegation asked that the second part be dropped as it was unclear in meaning and because it seemed to suggest, wrongly, that institutions could influence behavioural patterns. The SDLP and Alliance Party delegations wished to retain a specific reference to the respect which needed to be shown to both communities. After lengthy discussion, amendments proposed to the second part of 2(f) were accepted by all delegations.
- The discussion of principle 2(g) centred on whether the role granted to elected representatives in new political institutions could be restricted to those from constitutional political parties. In response to points raised by the UDUP delegation, the Government Team commented that it was difficult to imagine political institutions which would prove durable, were a role in them accorded to parties which did not follow the constitutional path.
- There was also lengthy discussion of the suggested principle 3(d) which referred to the need for new institutions in Northern Ireland to be compatible with developments in other parts of the UK. The UUP delegation explained that this was their proposal and one which they wished to see included in the suggestions paragraph. The UDUP delegation said that to exclude the principle would create an inequitable situation in which relations with the Republic of Ireland and European Community were mentioned

in the paper but relations with the other parts of the UK were not. The Government Team commented that, as drafted, the paragraph created difficulties for the parties as it asked them to consider compatibility with institutions which did not exist. The SDLP and Alliance Party delegations suggested the UDUP delegation's point had been met in principles 2(j) and 2(m). The delegations agreed that an amendment to 2(m) satisfied their respective points of views and agreed that 3(d) should be omitted from the revised draft. It was also agreed that all the remaining items in the "suggested" category should be moved into the "agreed" category. A revised, final version of the paper is at Annex B.

4. At the conclusion of the meeting a Press Statement was approved, and it was agreed that the next Plenary would take place on Thursday 7 May.

#### TALKS SECRETARIAT

## POLITICAL TALKS: COMMON PRINCIPLES

1. Taking as read the statement of 26 March 1991 in which it was accepted that the talks must focus on three main relationships, talks participants have identified a number of principles which should underlie any new political institutions in Northern Ireland.
2. It is agreed that they should be -
  - a. based on democratic principles and reflect the wishes of the electorate;
  - b. widely acceptable in the sense of providing an appropriate and equitable role for both sides of the community, such that both main parts of the Northern Ireland should be able to identify with it and feel that their representatives have a meaningful role to perform;
  - c. stable and durable in the sense of not being dependent on a particular election result or political deal. The system should, so far as possible, be self sustaining;
  - d. capable of evolution, in response to changing political realities, with the agreement of all concerned;
  - e. workable, in the sense of being as straightforward to operate as possible;
  - f. such as to avoid any entrenchment of the main community division and to enable the development of a fully pluralist society in which both main traditions would have parity of esteem;
  - g. such as to provide all constitutional political parties a role at an equal level of responsibility, and power proportional to their electoral strength in broad terms;
  - h. able to function effectively, efficiently and decisively within clearly defined areas of responsibility;

- i. innovative, in the sense of learning from and not modelled on any previous arrangements.

3. It was also suggested that any new political institutions should be:

- a. established within a newly defined relationship with UK institutions;
- b. competent to manage any relationship developed in strand two of the talks;
- c. capable of developing a direct relationship with EC institutions;
- d. compatible with any arrangements there might be for devolving powers to other countries or regions within the United Kingdom;
- e. capable of developing relationships with any devolved institutions in Great Britain;
- f. capable of securing public endorsement;
- g. consistent with the maximum possible delegation of authority;
- h. such as to ensure the greatest possible degree of parliamentary scrutiny of and public accountability for the exercise of powers of government within Northern Ireland.

## POLITICAL TALKS: COMMON PRINCIPLES

(5 May 1992 16.30)

1. Taking as read the statement of 26 March 1991 in which it was accepted that the talks must focus on three main relationships, talks participants have identified a number of principles which should underlie any new political institutions in Northern Ireland.
2. It is agreed that these institutions should be -
  - a. based on democratic principles and reflect the wishes of the electorate;
  - b. widely acceptable, in particular in the sense of providing an appropriate and equitable role for both sides of the community, such that both the main parts of the Northern Ireland community should be able to identify with them and feel that their representatives have a meaningful function to perform;
  - c. stable and durable in the sense of not being dependent on a particular election result or political deal. The system should, so far as possible, be self sustaining;
  - d. capable of development, in response to changing political realities, with the agreement of all concerned;
  - e. workable, in the sense of being as straightforward to operate as possible;
  - f. such as to avoid any entrenchment of the main community division and to encourage the development of a society in which both main traditions would be respected;
  - g. such as to provide all constitutional political parties with the opportunity to achieve a role at each level of responsibility, and to have a position proportional to their electoral strength in broad terms;

- h. able to function effectively, efficiently and decisively within clearly defined areas of responsibility;
- i. innovative, in the sense of learning from and not merely modelled on any previous arrangements;
- j. established within a defined relationship with UK institutions;
- k. competent to manage any relationship developed in strand two of the talks;
- l. capable of developing a direct relationship with EC institutions;
- m. capable of developing relationships with any devolved institutions in Great Britain present or future;
- n. capable of securing public endorsement;
- o. consistent with the maximum possible delegation of authority;
- p. such as to ensure the greatest possible degree of parliamentary scrutiny of and public accountability for the exercise of powers of government within Northern Ireland.