

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
ON THE MORNING OF 29 APRIL 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 Neeson	Rev Smyth
Mr Fell		
Mr Thomas	Mrs Bell	Mr Empey
Mr Bell	Mr Dickson	Mr Allen
Mr Maccabe	Mr Morrow	Mrs Bradford
Mr Hill	Mr McBride	Mr Donaldson (Part)
		Dr McGimpsey (Part)
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Mr Brooker	Mr Hume	Dr Paisley
Mr May	Mr Mallon	Mr Robinson
	Mr McGrady	Rev McCrea
<u>Also Present</u>		
Mr Fittall	Mr Farren	Mr Campbell
Mr Smith	Mrs Rogers	Mr Vitty
	Dr Hendron	Mr Gibson
	Mr Feeley	Mr McClure

The meeting began at 11.35 am and concluded at 12.54 pm.

2. The Government Team welcomed the Party Delegations in a set of opening remarks, text attached at Annex A.

3. The Chairman of the Business Committee reported on the meeting of 9 March, the main findings of which were agreed by the plenary session. Clarification was sought on whether the sub-committees as well as the plenary session might meet in London, and it was agreed that any part of the Strand 1 deliberations might take place in London, if convenient to all concerned. It was agreed that minutes of sub-committee meetings be forwarded to all those attending in future, rather than just party leaders. The Alliance Party delegation, commenting on the arrangements for the gap, suggested that there might come a point at which a substantial extension of the time available for talks was required, if too much business remained to be completed in the time remaining. However they were

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content to address the issue nearer the time. The UDUP delegation said that they wished to see the maximum degree of flexibility at this point. The Government Team explained that a gap of 3 months had been agreed with the Irish Government.

4. The UDUP and UUP delegations both said that more work needed to be done to the Government team paper "Realities and Common Themes" to take account of the 28 June party submissions before the paper would be ready for presentation to the plenary session. It was agreed that the paper, when revised following comments made in the Business Committee that afternoon, would be discussed by the Business Committee again on Monday. It was also agreed that all Government Team papers would be dated in future. The Government Team then invited the four parties to make brief presentations.

5. The Alliance Party delegation welcomed the new members of the Government Team. It drew attention to the work that had been conducted in the previous Talks, and expressed its concern that time be used most profitably in the coming weeks. The Alliance Party delegation said that the Talks were about negotiation, and seeking agreement on fair and reasonable systems of governance for Northern Ireland. The Talks should pick up where they had concluded, and move speedily to discussion of the substantive issues of Strand I. They welcomed the paper promised by the Government on political institutions, and agreed it should be discussed next week.

6. The SDLP delegation also welcomed the new members of the Government Team, and agreed with the comments made by the Government Team that an opportunity lay ahead to ensure the democratic process triumphed. The SDLP analysis of the problem began from the fact that problems had existed in Ireland prior to partition, and that the problems were therefore more fundamental than the mere existence of Northern Ireland or the form its institutions took. Two different, but equally legitimate, traditions existed. There should be an acceptance that the rights of Nationalists and Unionists to effective political, symbolic and administrative expression of their identity, their ethos and their way of life had to be addressed in

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the Talks process. The SDLP delegation said they were willing to provide a paper for discussion on the Unionist identity to that end, but recognised that the Unionist Parties would be the best arbiters of what that tradition was. The SDLP could also produce a paper on the Nationalist identity. The nature of the problem had changed as the old notion of the "nation-state" had changed in recent years. The crux of the matter was not what was on the table but what was agreed. Nothing could be agreed until everything had been agreed. The Talks should quickly define the problem, make that analysis public and then move on to address institutional matters.

7. The UUP delegation then made its presentation, the text of which is attached to this minute at Annex B. The UDUP delegation then made its presentation, the text of which is attached at Annex C.

8. The Government Team recommended and it was agreed that the Business Committee should meet that afternoon and again on Monday 4 May to discuss the 'Common Themes and Realities' paper and then to consider the handling of the Government Team's paper on Options for New Political Institutions. The plenary session would resume on Tuesday, with a further plenary meeting on Thursday 7 May. The latter would create difficulties for delegates who were Members of Parliament but it was agreed that senior delegates should be empowered to take decisions as and when required in the absence of the leaders. The Government Team was asked to consider ways to facilitate Northern Ireland Members of Parliament making their contribution to the Debate on the Queen's Speech in addition to participating in the Talks. The Government Team, commenting on the volume of work to be conducted, said meetings outside formal talks sessions might be useful to all concerned.

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9. The UDUP and SDLP delegations raised the question of confidentiality with the Government Team in the light of comments made by the leader of the Northern Ireland Conservatives. The Government Team gave an assurance that it would remain loyal to the confidentiality agreement without exception. A draft press statement was then agreed.

Talks Secretariat
30 April 1992

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