

ALLIANCE PARTY OF NORTHERN IRELAND

REF: T90.01

DATE: 29 June 1990

MEETING TO DISCUSS ARRANGEMENTS FOR TALKS

PRESENT: John Alderdice  
Gordon Mawhinney  
David Ford

Quintin Thomas  
David Hill  
John McConnell  
Tom Watson

1. Preliminary Discussion

Party Leader made it clear that whilst Alliance had not been particularly involved in discussions about pre-conditions for talks, since this was not seen as a problem for us, that the Party had strong views on the timetable, agenda and process for talks and would expect to be fully involved. An assurance was given that this would be the case and that there would be information in advance of the Secretary of State's statement on Thursday 5 July.

Alliance position is that any talks with Dublin should be by all Northern Ireland Members of the Conference together. Civil Service and the Secretary of State believe that the collective team concept is unattainable but agreed that all should be in the room at the same time.

It was agreed that as much as possible should be agreed in bilateral meetings before the Conference formally assembles. There is a need to get into the habit of reaching agreements and any timing of the timetable should be merely "indicative" to avoid undue pressure.

2. Party Leader Outlined Alliance Document "Arrangements for the Conduct of an Interparty Conference.

2.1 Venue (first stage) The symbolic significance of Stormont was stressed.

2.2 Meetings with interests outside Northern Ireland. Links with Europe were mentioned. It was agreed that London would be the appropriate place for North/South Meetings - at least for the symbolic first meeting - and probably on a continuing basis.

2.3 Requests for facilities were noted.

2.4 Size of delegations etc. The Civil Service pointed out that the Secretary of State would be largely seeking informality and a conversational style rather than the formal negotiating arrangements as at the Atkins Conference. This was agreed to be beneficial by Alliance.

There was no discussion about the numbers for each delegation.

2.5 Financial Recompense

The Civil service have no specific points at present but raised no objections to the principle.

2.6 Security is clearly viewed very seriously by the Civil Service. Party Leader emphasised the need for a short (2 to three months) time for negotiations.

2.7 Timetable. It was agreed that a measure of flexibility would need to be built in. Civil Service appear to be thinking of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday with plans made two to three weeks in advance.

2.8 Chair. It is assumed that the Secretary of State will chair meetings. Alliance pointed out the implications of the existence of Conservative representatives in Northern Ireland now and the question of links to the Dublin Government.

2.9 Recording. It was agreed that a detailed record is not appropriate. Civil Service suggested that if the record is to facilitate understanding it may not be appropriate to seek agreement on the record for every session - perhaps only where specific agreements have been reached.

2.10 Public Information. It was agreed that silence is impossible when the Conference assembles. Civil Service have no specific plans but agreed that it was essential to have full agreement between the parties how media be handled.

Preliminary:   Practicalities  
                  Method of agreement  
                  Method of approval  
                  Agenda

#### Stage 1: Framework

                  Status of NI  
                  Preferred form of government for NI  
                  Irish dimension

If agreement can be reached in principle ( that NI stays part of the UK, that there should be devolution on a cross community basis, and that there should be role for the Republic ) then it would be possible to proceed to Stage 2 for more detailed discussion.

#### Stage 2: Devolution

a/               Assembly/ format, method of election etc  
                  Powers to be devolved  
                  Executive/powers. selection, operation  
                  Committee structures  
                  Test of acceptability  
                  Safeguards

These are all areas which can properly be agreed amongst the conference participants. A substantial measure of agreement on these internal structures would be necessary before there would be any point in widening the discussion.

b/               Security  
                  Cross border co-operation  
                  European aspects

While these would be of the utmost significance to any new devolved structure they necessarily involve the co-operation of others, and may best of taken along with Stage 3.

#### Stage 3: British/Irish/Northern Irish relations

The Northern Ireland conference would need to discuss these areas, and if at all possible establish a substantial measure of agreement on them. However, because they necessarily involve others in their implementation, it would be best to convene, at an appropriate point, a second, tri-partite, conference, involving the Northern Ireland conference, the British government and the Irish government. This conference would be a continuation of the existing process, should involve no significant break in proceedings, and should be an intensive culmination to the process, in which final agreement on all aspects of the package can be reached.

British/ Northern Irish relations will be extensively covered in the course of what is here described as the Northern Ireland conference. A bilateral meeting between the Northern conference and the government of the Republic may be of value prior to the final three way conference.