

RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD IN PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS
ON TUESDAY 25 JUNE 1991

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Dr Paisley
Minister of State	Mr Close	Mr Robinson
Mr Fell	Mr Neeson	Rev McCrea
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr Gibson
Mr Thomas	Mr Dickson	Mr Dodds
Mr McNeill	Mr McBride	Mr Campbell
	Mr Morrow	
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Hill		Mr Molyneaux
Mr Lindsay	Mr Hume	Mr Nicholson
	Mr Mallon	Mr Trimble
<u>Also Present</u>	Mr McGrady	Mr Allen
	Mr Haughey	Mr Empey
Mr Pawson	Mr Farren	Mr Maginnis
	Mr Gallagher	Mr McGimpsey

A plenary meeting of strand one took place at Parliament Buildings between 16.05 and 17.30 on the 25th June. This was a continuation of the discussion on the document Workplan Item 6 under the sub-heading "Nature of the Northern Ireland Community".

2. The Government Team began by inviting the UDUP to elaborate on a comment in a previous session in relation to nationalists not accepting the Government in Northern Ireland. Was it the case that while nationalists may aspire to a separate form of Government it did not necessarily follow that they did not accept the authority of the existing Government, for instance in paying taxes? The UDUP replied that Nationalists paid taxes by legal compulsion. They would claim that they had no freedom to express themselves because there was no Council of Ireland and they were therefore looking for a mechanism which would allow the Irish Government to sit in equality with the British Government.

3. The SDLP commented that everyone needed to look forward and that all past attempts to solve the problem had failed. These past attempts included the years of Unionist rule and the various failed initiatives since Direct Rule had been introduced. Direct Rule had not solved the problem but had been fairer than Unionist rule in that there had been improvements in anti-discrimination laws, voting rights, the electoral system and no gerrymandering of

constituencies. The uniting factor for everyone in Northern Ireland was sharing the same social and economic problems and the same piece of earth. The Anglo-Irish Agreement had given recognition to both identities for the first time and the SDLP asked who, on the Protestant side, had been damaged by the working of the Agreement. The SDLP said that they had identified the nature of the problem in pages 3 to 5 of their document but that unionists were either unwilling or unable to identify the problem as they saw it.

4. There was a discussion on the extent of nationalist involvement over the years in local government, area boards and the Security Forces, particularly the UDR. The SDLP said they were not unwilling but prevented from participating in these but a contrary view, with examples, was put by the UDUP. The UUP said that given the fact the minority community had not supported the State, how could the SDLP now reassure Unionists that it had serious intentions of participating in all strands of life in the Province? The two Unionist parties also made the point that charges of gerrymandering of Westminster constituency boundaries could not be attributed to the Stormont Parliament.

5. In a reference to the need to accommodate two distinct communal identities the UDUP said that identity had expression in various ways such as music, literature, poetry or marching. The SDLP accepted that it was not easy to define one's identity but what was certain about the past was that it had failed and all attempts to rectify the situation had also failed. The problem existed before the creation of Northern Ireland and therefore was not a Northern Ireland problem as such. A defensive approach to identity would simply reinforce the problem. According to the SDLP, unionists appeared to see the problem as who wielded power, not how two sets of people could be accommodated and accepted. In the present situation instability threatened everyone and was a fundamental threat to life itself. Everyone needed to face up to the reasons why Northern Ireland was unstable. This could only be done when Unionists defined who and what they were, then agreement could be reached. The SDLP wanted to see people on the island living together by agreement. Neither the unionist nor the nationalist

identities were confined to Northern Ireland though a substantial part of each clearly was.

6. The Alliance Party made it clear that they, like the Unionists, had not been consulted about the Anglo Irish Agreement. They asked Unionists to think about why the British Government behaved in such a way towards them over quite a period of time. Nationalist frustration at the lack of a Unionist analysis of the problem could be because there was more than one Unionist analysis. Alliance suggested that it may not be necessary to agree on the problem and cited the case of Parliament where there was clearly not disagreement because of differing political philosophies, yet people were prepared to sit down and do business together. In response to further contributions from the UDUP and UUP about the motives and actions of the British Government and particularly the FCO the Alliance Party suggested that they had displayed not just passivity but antipathy towards the Government and this was an attitude which people who expressed a wish to stay within the United Kingdom needed to address. The UDUP said that they wanted full power of self-determination and that the Government had not the right to take this away from Unionists. The SDLP said that the only guarantee was with the people who actually lived in Northern Ireland and not with Governments and stressed again that it would be helpful if one or more Unionist analyses were put on the table.

7. In conclusion the Government Team said that members of the Business Committee would be reporting back to their groups over tea and would meet again at 18.30. It was confirmed that discussion of Workplan Item 6 would continue during the evening session and into the following day.

TALKS SECRETARIAT