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SUMMARY RECORD OF LIAISON SUB-COMMITTEE MEETING ON CONFIDENCE BUILDING MEASURES ON TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 1998 (1442)

CHAIRMAN: Mr Holkeri

THOSE PRESENT: British Government
Irish Government

Alliance

Labour

Northern Ireland Women's Coalition

Progressive Unionist Party

Sinn Féin

Social Democratic and Labour Party

Ulster Unionist Party

1. The Chairman (Mr Holkeri) called the meeting to order at 1442 and explained that the minutes of the previous meeting were not yet ready, due to a technical hitch, and would be circulated as soon as possible. Alliance said it was trying to involve people in this Sub-committee who were not engaged elsewhere in the process, and it was therefore very important to try to keep the meetings on a regular schedule. The Chairman said there had been some changes due to the meeting in London, but the next meeting in two weeks' time would return to Wednesday (25 February). On 11 January the Chair had said it would circulate a list of the participants nominated by each party to attend the meetings, and that list had now been given to delegations.

2. The British Government introduced the paper it had circulated on economic and social issues. It said there had been a good discussion on these matters, and this session would provide the opportunity to complete the discussion on the three broad remaining themes: elimination of discrimination, reduction of divisions and culture and heritage. The British

Government said its paper, of course, did not purport to be prescriptive or restrictive. The Chairman said that it had been agreed at the last meeting to come back to economic and social issues, and if possible begin the discussion on the next item, paramilitary activity today.

3. The UUP said it wanted to follow on from the earlier discussion with some questions to the Governments, beginning with the Irish Government. In paragraph 2 of its paper, the Irish Government had referred to high levels of economic deprivation, and had made a correlation with political instability. All parties were concerned about instability, and the Irish Government could contribute to stability by recognising certain international standards. In paragraphs 5 (fair employment legislation alone will not eliminate the unemployment differential), 6 (SACHR has recommended affirmative action) and 7 (the Irish Government calls for the early implementation of the SACHR report), taken together, the Irish Government seemed to have recommended affirmative action. The UUP asked if the Irish Government therefore believed that if, say, 70% of the unemployed were Catholics, that 70% of available jobs should go to Catholics, assuming equal qualifications? The Irish Government said that, in its paper, it had been quoting from the SACHR report, noting that its equality review had been carried out and welcoming and encouraging its implementation. It was not suggesting, of course, that economic disadvantage was one of the principal causes of the conflict. It recognised that the existing fair employment legislation had been fairly successful, but there were clearly some recommendations outstanding. The UUP said that in these paragraphs the Irish Government seemed to be saying affirmative action was needed, but the party had a problem with affirmative action since this meant discrimination against the other community. If Catholics obtained jobs in proportion to the unemployment figures, for instance, which seemed fair, the differential would only be maintained, not reduced. So affirmative action might require say 80% of jobs to go to Catholics. This would clearly

adversely affect the Protestant community. The Irish Government said that it rejected the idea of improving the position of one community by discriminating against the other. The Irish Government had raised the question of discrimination against Protestants with the Fair Employment Commission. There did not seem to be any indication that the Fair Employment legislation had produced such discrimination.

4. The UUP said that in paragraph 4 the Irish Government's paper it said that a belief in a community that it was not getting a fair deal could be a force for instability. Did the Irish Government in fact believe that nationalists were not getting a fair deal? The Irish Government said there could be no doubt that that had been the case in the past, which was why the Fair Employment legislation was there. When people grew up feeling they had no stake in society, they were more likely to drift into anti-social activity. Economic disadvantage in both communities had been a force for instability, a point expressed only last week by community workers.

5. The UUP said the Irish Government's last comment was a dubious one, that unemployment was itself an acceptable reason to join in organisations participating in actions against the State. The party turned to the British Government's paper of 2 January which said (paragraph 13) that the long term unemployment differential existed for complex reasons, and that it was not an appropriate indicator of the fairness of the present labour market. The party accepted that there had been greater social disadvantage on one side, but said that the unemployment differential had been widely used to "prove" discrimination. The British Government was now accepting that it was not an indication of discrimination. The British Government said the unemployment differential was important, and what had gone on in the past had often been wrong, but it certainly felt that the UN report, for example, had not accurately reflected the situation today. The UUP said the British

Government often spoke of "combating discrimination", and wished would say publicly what it had said today. This would relieve the Protestant community of the unjustified allegation that they were rampant discriminators. When there were positive things to be said, they should be said loudly. The Irish Government wished to clarify that of course it had not said that unemployment was an excuse for illegal activities, but it was clear that if a section of the community felt excluded then that could lead to instability.

6. Sinn Féin, responding to the British Government paper, said that everyone would accept that peace in Ireland had to be built on respect for equality and justice. It was the UUP which had built the rotten foundations of injustice and discrimination which had brought everyone here. The SACHR Report had made 156 recommendations on fair employment and housing. It had found that despite 20 years' campaigning for equality, Catholics were three times more likely to be unemployed. The party was not suggesting reverse discrimination, as there were certainly Protestant areas suffering as well, but it was generally accepted that there was a serious imbalance in all the organs of the State, and this needed to begin to be addressed. The structures of the State had been built on inequality and injustice.

7. Alliance said there was no question that there had once been significant discrimination in Northern Ireland, and no doubt there still was some, but a massive effort had been made to combat this. The SACHR Report showed that this effort was working very well, at the level of intake to jobs now. The legislation was working, and credit should be given for this. The party said there was a continuing discrepancy in unemployment, but this was not the fault of the legislation, and may in fact not be directly remediable. Some of it may be more structural, for example, due to location. A very wide problem was that people had a deep reluctance to work outside perceived safe areas. The PUP said it was circulating papers on economic and social

issues, and on paramilitary activities. The party posed some questions to the British Government. Did it now accept that the Robson index being used by its Departments to measure deprivation was inadequate, and led to misdirected effort? Could it be expected to introduce a new mechanism, in consultation with community activists and parties, focused not on nationalism and loyalism but on how disadvantage affected the economic classes. Would it accept that the historic blackspots of academic under-achievement in north and west Belfast should be designated an education priority, and would it meet local activists to discuss this?

8. The SDLP said the UUP seemed to be saying that the community it represented was not guilty of rampant discrimination, but that it recognised the considerable social disadvantages in some part of the community. The SDLP would have some sympathy with this view. There had been a sea change in attitudes and practices over the last 20 years, and especially the last 10. The effort on fair employment had been gradually intensified and raised to the level of the recent legislation. A great deal had been achieved since Direct Rule. In the light of very clear evidence that there were and remained malpractices in some enterprises that needed the FEA mechanisms, it was unfortunate that there had been considerable resistance to British Government initiatives by the UUP. The SDLP said that a great deal had been achieved in promoting a fair employment culture in the workplace. Practices such as the display of emblems were being effectively reduced and dealt with. Direct discrimination of the old and most noticeable kind had been addressed, in that people knew they had remedies available. Employers had had reservations about stringent measures and requirements, but had come to appreciate firm guidelines and statutory requirements, giving them a clear picture of what should be done. This was all to the credit of those responsible for the legislation, in 1976 and, especially, in 1989. Everyone had learnt a lot from this process.

9. The SDLP said there were still major social disadvantages. All rich societies had pockets of deprivation, but the most recent figures still showed that in both Belfast and Derry the areas with the highest levels of deprivation were still predominantly catholic. It was over simple to say that all of this was the result of direct discrimination, but there was undoubtedly a legacy of structural discrimination. It was not possible, as shown in previous SACHR studies, to explain the figures otherwise. The party suggested that if the parties were dealing with this directly, after a settlement, it would be largely irrelevant how the disadvantage had arisen. It would be difficult to avoid the conclusion that higher levels of disadvantage would require a higher input to address them. This might lead to an accusation that more money would be spent on catholic areas, but that was hardly reverse discrimination. The levels of disadvantage were staring us in the face, and needed to be addressed. What was to be the response to the needs of these people?

10. The NIWC said the starting point was the clear historical record that discrimination did occur, but that did not mean demonising all Protestants as rampant discriminators. The party urged the British Government to take action on the SACHR Report, and urged the UUP to recognise that the legislation was there to protect everyone. The differential in unemployment meant that different sectors of the community would be addressed in different ways, but it should be looked at by areas most in need, rather than confessionally. There was a clear link (but not as an excuse) between unemployment and involvement in gangs and other organisations. The party supported the PUP's emphasis on broadening consultation. It was important to make sure that sections in need were not missed out.

11. The UUP agreed with the thrust of the SDLP's argument on differentials and disadvantage, but said there were important points to bear in

mind when looking at the statistical facts. Derry had the highest unemployment in the UK, but also the highest job creation and the highest rate of entry to the job market. Between 1971 and 1991 the working age population of Catholics went up by 28%, of Protestants by 4%. The party said that no matter how fair the market was it would be very difficult to combat the implications of that. The SACHR Report, by not recognising that there was much more fairness in recruitment now, had been unfair in not recognising the great change in the Protestant community on this issue, and had also done a disservice to Catholics by reinforcing the image of widespread discrimination. The UUP said that studies had suggested that the job market working fairly could reduce the unemployment imbalance by about 2% every five years. In a stable employment market that would work over time to correct the imbalance, but when the great majority of school leavers were Catholic everyone was chasing a moving target.

12. The SDLP recognised that statistics masked a wealth of subtleties and crudities, and there was an element of a moving target. The unemployment differential did reflect a significant reality, however, not just people's imagination. In terms of confidence building, everyone needed to recognise the scale of disadvantage and consider what factors were contributing to it, and what difficulties people were facing, and how these issues could best be addressed.

13. Sinn Féin referred to earlier UUP comments regarding unemployment rates in Derry. The party said the Derry and Strabane area had consistently suffered from the highest unemployment rates in Northern Ireland. Such rates also correlated to poor mortality and health statistics for that area. The party said if everyone was to build trust and hence remove issues of contention, then measures which were fair to all people had to be introduced. Poverty and deprivation were not issues which the Government, or anyone

else, wished to see making headline news so it was up to the British Government to look at enhancing the compliance provisions in the 1989 Fair Employment Act - especially in the area of public contract work.

14. Sinn Féin said the PUP's comments regarding educational disadvantage and the settling up of priority areas needed to be listened to by the British Government. The needs of the young, particularly in the 14-19 age range, required to be addressed in order to give such individuals a stake in their community and a stable way of life. The party said the British Government also needed to consider doing more than simply offering PAFT and TSN initiatives. These were only clichés in addressing real issues on the ground and it was perhaps time to review policies and introduce new strategies in this area. Sinn Féin said there seemed to be a perception in communities that Government Departments had a reluctance to address the problems of TSN and PAFT. It added that more should also be done to help the long term unemployed.

15. Labour said it was good to see agreement around the table in terms of recognising the problems of the past and to the realisation that that situation was changing. On a broader level, however, the party said this wasn't really happening. There were still strong prejudices which had to be got rid off in political parties. Attitudes still needed to be sorted out. It was all right talking within the confines of the conference room but there were still major problems out there. Labour said there needed to be more investment in Northern Ireland. The party said the previous Conservative Government had reduced this but there was an urgent need to get back on track and stabilise the employment situation. It also needed to be made clear that the problem of working class people getting employment opportunities was someone's responsibility in Government - the question was who? Resolving such an issue needed a whole range of scientific skills and ability as well as

investment in education to address literacy problems, skills etc. All this meant additional employment. Labour said, in Northern Ireland, religion was linked to a political goal. There were two communities with two different political objectives. The difference was in the political aspiration of both communities and the only way forward was to create a stable society where trust was the key and people could be heard. Labour said the problem of discrimination would not be solved outside of people being treated fairly on their political aspirations.

16. The Chairman asked for any further comments. Hearing none he then asked the British Government to respond.

17. The British Government said it had been a useful and interesting debate. It said, in relation to the points raised on Fair Employment legislation, that that legislation was working well. The SACHR Report had stated that neither community was experiencing systematic discrimination at interview level. This of course didn't explain the 2:1 ratio of Catholic male unemployment over Protestant but perhaps polarised areas and elements of remaining discrimination had led to areas where unemployment was higher than others. Irrespective of the reasons, the British Government said this issue had to be tackled as did the issue of areas of social deprivation. The British Government said it would shortly be publishing its comments on the SACHR Report and hoped this response would be put into the talks process - perhaps through the Sub-committee.

18. The British Government said that as to earlier PUP comments about the inadequacy of the Robson Index, even though this was the best available, there were others and it would update and use academic evidence to support the findings of the index. The British Government said it would be happy to discuss this with the PUP and others if they so wished. It said it also

accepted that educational disadvantage was not concentrated in one area. The Minister responsible for education would, without doubt, be interested in meeting participants on their concerns on this issue as well and their comments would be passed on to him.

19. The British Government said that on the issue of discrimination, one had to remember that it came in different shapes and forms. The role of Government was to tackle the result of discrimination irrespective of what form it took. It said it hoped that many of the issues raised would improve as the national economy improved and Welfare to Work and other programs bedded down and became successful. Of course, matters would also be assisted considerably if peace came to Northern Ireland and this was what the present political negotiations were all about.

20. The Chairman asked for further comments. The PUP restated its earlier remarks concerning North Belfast as an area which was the most disadvantaged in Belfast. It was clearly the worst area in the city in terms of social deprivation, poverty and educational disadvantage and it needed to become a priority for Government. The PUP said the Robson Index appeared to be satisfactory for Government use but it did not have the confidence of those in the communities. The British Government said it would raise the North Belfast comments with the relevant Minister. It added that if it were possible from the current process to get to a situation where it was the people on the ground who were governing themselves, then this was what everyone had to try to achieve and thereby gain the obvious advantages of localised democracy and decision making on such issues.

21. The Chairman said he now believed that a conclusion had been reached on social and economic issues. The SDLP asked when cultural issues might be discussed as it did not want this issue to slip from the

agenda. The Chairman noted the SDLP's comments and said that he would ensure that the Sub-committee return to this issue at a later date if this was the view of the participants. Hearing no objections, the Chairman said he now wished to move on to a preliminary discussion of agenda item 3 - Paramilitary Activity. He added that to date only one paper had been produced on this issue by the PUP. Alliance intervened to say that it simply wanted to make a short opening statement on item 3 and come back for a more detailed discussion at the next meeting. The Chairman asked whether participants were content to proceed in this way. Hearing no objections the Chairman asked the British Government for its opening remarks.

22. The British Government began by commenting on the murder of Mr Campbell the previous night and the further murder which had taken place in Belfast that afternoon. It said these were both appalling acts which it utterly condemned. It was too early to say who was responsible. The police were investigating both incidents intensively and thoroughly. If the attack was shown to have been committed by an organisation connected with a participant in the talks, then the implications of that would be very seriously examined. The British Government said it was determined to maintain the integrity of the process.

23. The British Government said it strongly supported the view of the International Body that it was important for all participants to take steps to build confidence throughout the process. In that spirit it had played a full part in the Sub-committee in discussing confidence-related issues for which it had responsibility. The continuing dialogue on prisons matters was only one example of that. But it said this item concerned confidence building measures which fell within others' control. The International Body's report made it quite clear that "support for the use of violence is incompatible with participation in the democratic process" and that "the early termination of

paramilitary activities ... would demonstrate a commitment to peaceful methods and so build trust among other parties and alleviate the fears and anxieties of the general population...”.

24. The British Government said one of the principal aims of the process was to provide a permanent lasting peace for everyone in Northern Ireland. It wanted to create an environment where everyone was free from fear, threats, intimidation, and where no-one could be judged or punished except through the proper judicial process, or suffer attack simply because of their religious affiliation. Indeed, it wanted to arrive at a point where paramilitary organisations had no basis for existence, and no-one should feel the need to join such a group. But it was clear, at present, paramilitary groups were active, following their own destructive agendas. The CAC, INLA and the LVF had all admitted responsibility for horrendous acts of violence. The UFF have been implicated in several recent murders and, as a result, the UDP were no longer participating in the talks.

25. Many criminal acts continued to be committed. Since July last year there had been almost 100 so-called punishment attacks, including some 35 shootings. In addition, threats had been made to both individuals and communities. The principles of democracy and non-violence, to which all participants had subscribed, required an absolute commitment from parties to urge that such attacks stop, and a determination to take effective steps to prevent such actions. The British Government said it attached the highest importance to the full observance of this requirement. The barbaric attacks which had been suffered by victims on both sides of the community contravened all concepts of justice and human rights and had no place in a just society where the principles of democracy had to be paramount.

26. Regrettably, it was often not possible to attribute clear responsibility for terrorist incidents to a particular organisation. But Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure set out a clear procedure for the rapid handling of representations that a participant had dishonoured the principles. The two Governments took that procedure very seriously indeed, and had already demonstrated that both were prepared to act robustly and quickly where it could be shown that a breach of the principles had taken place. The British Government said it could assure the Sub-committee that the issue of responsibility for terrorist attacks, and the possible implication for parties in the talks, were monitored very carefully indeed.

27. The International Body's Report also mentioned a range of other paramilitary activities which should cease, or where action should be taken to build confidence. It urged the relevant parties to use their influence to press forward on all these matters. The British Government said it would particularly highlight in this area the need for information to be given to the families and relatives of "the disappeared" - those who were presumed to have been murdered by terrorists, but whose bodies had never been recovered. It did seem to be a matter of common humanity that in the case, for example, of Jean McConville, murdered by the IRA 25 years ago, the family should at long last be allowed to mourn their mother and give her a dignified and final resting place. It believed that action in this area would be widely welcomed throughout the community. It also believed that it was important that those who might have been coerced into leaving their homes, for example in Fermanagh, should be free to return without threat to their personal safety.

28. In conclusion the British Government said it believed that real progress on these issues was of the greatest importance to the process, and looked forward to genuine dialogue in the Sub-committee.

29. The Irish Government said it would like to start its contribution by expressing its total condemnation of the previous night's brutal murder in Belfast and that day's killing. It expressed its sincere sympathy to the bereaved families and hoped that those responsible would be brought quickly to justice. The Irish Government said it welcomed the opportunity to discuss paramilitary activity and in particular steps which should be taken by paramilitary groups to build confidence. All participants at the talks had committed themselves to the principles of democracy and non-violence as set forth in the Report of the International Body. The Mitchell Principles, required parties to affirm their total and absolute commitment to six key principles of democracy and non-violence.

30. The Irish Government said Rule 29 of the Rules of Procedure provided a mechanism for dealing with breaches of the Mitchell Principles. This procedure was, of course, most recently invoked to consider the continued participation of the UDP following an open admission by the UFF that they had participated in sectarian murders. While the decision to expel the UDP was a difficult one for the Governments in the context of their desire to promote an inclusive settlement, it was the only decision the Governments could have taken. The Irish Government said it shared the sense of anger and outrage at the recent spate of sectarian murders carried out in Northern Ireland. All murders were obscene, but the random nature of recent murders had been particularly shocking. This catalogue of murders had underlined just how unacceptable were the alternatives to democratic dialogue. They served as a stark reminder of how easy it was for the spiral of violent action and counteraction to resume.

31. It said there were other areas of alleged paramilitary activity which were equally unacceptable. The practice of "so-called" punishment attacks

and beatings was one which required urgent attention. The Irish Government said it had made clear on many occasions its total abhorrence of these practices. Their persistence remained a matter of grave concern. Such acts were totally reprehensible and anti-democratic. The ending of such punishment beatings would be a significant confidence building measure. The Irish Government said it had also spoken out about the issue of missing persons. As recently as last week, the Taoiseach addressed this issue in the Dail and said it would be very helpful confidence building measure if a serious attempt were made to resolve this issue. Given the passage of time, it was not saying that it could be easily resolved, but it believed that there were people who must know the possible location and whereabouts of the missing persons. The least the families of those concerned deserved was to be allowed to bury their loved ones in dignity.

32. The Irish Government said it was also unacceptable that people were forced to leave their homes by threats to their safety. It believed it would represent a significant confidence building measure if no further threats were issued and if those who had fled were free to return home without fear of further intimidation. All parties to the talks had committed themselves fully to the principles of democracy and non-violence which underpinned the process. It wished to commend the parties present for this. The Irish Government said it had taken careful note of the PUP's paper. It restated its view that the talks were dedicated to the idea that a comprehensive political settlement could, once and for all, eradicate all political violence from Northern Ireland. It looked forward to continuing to work to bring about that settlement.

33. Alliance said the meeting today was being held in sombre times with two murders in the last 24 hours. The violence continued and threatened the work going on in the talks. The party said it hadn't tabled a paper at this stage but would wish to table the recent FAIT dossier to the Independent

Chairmen and other participants. The dossier listed beatings, tortures, attacks and threats over the last two years which totalled some 889 incidents linked to organisations who were in turn linked to some of the participants around the table. The party said this was a terrible litany of violence which had to be brought to an end.

34. Alliance said it wasn't in the business of seeking to expel further parties from the talks but the continuation of such activity profoundly undermined the confidence of those associated with those organisations. The credibility of the process was weakened by such activity and tactics. It was intolerable, unacceptable and dangerous to what was being attempted in the talks process. The party referred to the Jean McConville case and the fact that no progress had been made on this. Furthermore targeting and surveillance were continuing as was expulsion. All this had to be brought to an end. The party said that much of this activity fell under Mitchell Principle (f) and its contents had to be taken seriously by those who had influence with the perpetrators. Alliance said the process would be in further danger if those people didn't do as much as possible to halt the violence.

35. Labour said it condemned violence from whatever source. However violence was inevitable where a conflict of political views was present in a society. Removing the violence couldn't be done by simply condemning. There needed to be more than this. The party said it had regretted the circumstances of the UDP's withdrawal. Those leading the party were sincere and it hoped that they would return to the process in due course. Labour said it would provide further comments on item 3 in writing.

36. The NIWC said if everyone wanted to build a society on the principles of non violence and justice then they had to realise that political violence couldn't be turned off like a tap. The party said it was opposed to groups and

organisations acting as judge and jury and it was against these people taking the right of life of others. The NIWC said it urged anyone who had information regarding missing bodies to do what they could to assist in this area. Movement on this issue would open up the healing process. The party said it respected and acknowledged the part that parties associated with those organisations had played in brokering cease-fires and ensuring that, where possible, these remained intact. It was essential also that these same parties were present in the process - not outside it. The party said that one of the main difficulties in addressing this issue was providing policing to a divided society. In many areas there was no confidence in policing and the alternative was paramilitary policing. People had to recognise the reality of this situation. There also had to be less time spent excluding parties from the talks since all needed to be included to get on with the real business.

Comments in relation to the statements of the NIWC, Dáil Éireann 2002

37. The PUP said both Governments had condemned and also listed the range of paramilitary activities. It was, however, more a case of trying to change the mindsets of those carrying out these activities. The party said it continued to provide analysis to the UVF yet it had been condemned for doing this, even within its own community. The PUP said it was worth bearing in mind that the paramilitaries hadn't come from Mars or hadn't been born into such activity. It asked whether the Alliance party shouldn't be attempting to take such people on rather than simply issuing condemnatory statements. After all what was missing from the entire debate was how to go about ensuring that the poison didn't enter the minds of these people in the first place.

38. The PUP questioned some of statistics contained in the FAIT dossier. It also wondered about the accuracy of the figures concerning expulsions since it believed some of those who had been expelled were members of FAIT prior to this action occurring. The party said everyone needed to know

exactly what was being talked about if the FAIT document was tabled for discussion. The PUP said there had to be a responsibility on everyone to address the whole issue of paramilitaryism including creating a democratic process free from such activity. Parties also had to move away from simply condemning those other parties who had associations with certain paramilitary groups for not doing enough when the former had done little to stop paramilitary activity themselves.

39. Alliance asked the PUP whether the latter accepted that it (Alliance) had been fighting against the paramilitaries for over 25 years. The PUP acknowledged those comments. Sinn Féin said it wanted an end to all violence and a peaceful and lasting settlement. The party's position on violence was that which was committed in the response to the Mitchell Commission. In relation to the disappearances of bodies, Sinn Féin said its position had always been that if anyone had information it should make this available forthwith. The party was and had always been committed to this. The families involved needed the full support of everyone. Regarding punishment beatings, Sinn Féin said it opposed these but the lack of confidence in policing accentuated this situation. Sinn Féin said it also wished to discuss issues such as collusion, targeting and involvement in drugs and it intended to have a paper prepared for the next discussion.

40. The SDLP condemned those responsible for the murders over last 24 hours and offered condolences to the victims' families. The party said that clearly there were those intent on fomenting violence and pushing their agenda against the talks with the possibility of provoking vicious responses and so on. The party said that while it understood that condemnatory statements could be viewed as empty rhetoric, they were still necessary. The party said it recognised the significant contribution which parties like the PUP had made in creating the cease-fires and with them a more hopeful climate

was being created in a more peaceful atmosphere - despite incidents such as the last few days. Credit was due to those in both the loyalist and republican movements for such a significant contribution which hopefully could improve the lasting conditions for peace. The party said in doing this, they needed to enforce the message that confidence building was not a one way street. On disappearances, efforts had been made and must continue. It was the same with punishment beatings. Action needed to be taken and a response shown in communities. The same position held on expulsions. Despite the questions over the FAIT statistics, many people had been affected. The SDLP said that the values which everyone wanted in a new society needed to be enunciated regularly. People had to use their influence in those communities and perhaps this would give confidence to everyone else in their attempts to achieve a peaceful solution.

41. The UUP said it condemned the recent murders and offered condolences to the families. The party said such activity was not a question of following orders within an organisation which absolved individuals from the responsibility of carrying it out. It was a question of direct personal responsibility. The UUP said the only way participants could express annoyance at these activities was by robustly using Rule 29 - if evidence was found of any associated group carrying out such tactics.

42. The Chairman said he wished to propose that the present discussion be continued at the next meeting on 25 February. He added that that meeting should also devote some time to deciding when to pencil in cultural issues for discussion. The NIWC asked how the issue of prisoners would be taken forward and whether this would occur at the next meeting. The Chairman proposed that this be discussed on 25 February and if participants

so wished to table papers on paramilitary activity, then these needed to be submitted by 20 February.

**Independent Chairmen Notetakers
25 February 1998**