

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS  
ON MONDAY 9 MARCH 1992Government TeamSecretary of State  
Minister of StateMr Fell  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Bell  
Mr MaccabeTalks SecretariatMr Lindsay  
Mr McVeighAlso PresentMr Fittall  
Mr Brooker  
Mr SmithAlliance PartyDr Alderdice  
Mr Morrow  
Mr NeesonMr Ford  
Mrs Bell  
Mr McGarry  
Mr McBride  
Mr Dickson  
Mr Maguire  
Mr JonesSDLPMr Hume  
Mr Mallon  
Mr McGrady  
  
Mr Farren  
Mr Haughey  
Mrs Rodgers  
Dr Hendron  
Mr Feeley  
Mr Maginness  
Mr Gallagher  
Mr McClelland  
Mr DurkanUUPMr Molyneaux  
Mr Cunningham  
Mr NicholsonMr Empey  
Mr Allen  
Mr Trimble  
Mr Maginnis  
Mrs Bradford  
Mr Donaldson  
Dr McGimpsey  
Rev SmythUDUPDr Paisley  
Mr Robinson  
Rev McCreaMr Campbell  
Miss Paisley  
Mr Gibson  
Mr Vitty

The meeting began at 14.52 and ended at 15.53.

2. The Government Team proposed that the next stage of the agenda and the subject of venues should be referred to the Business Committee. Those present agreed. The Government Team further said that, in relation to a gap, its length would be determined by an Inter Governmental Conference held after the Election. Comments were invited to help those involved in setting the gap, particularly as some participants had expressed concerns about the need to take account of the illness of participants etc.

3. The DUP delegation said it would be unfortunate if the gap (or 'suspension') was not long enough to do the job properly. They realised that it could not be open-ended. But it should be remembered that it was designed to cover all three Strands, the

final Strand involving the two Governments, who should act expeditiously also. The Alliance delegation noted that previous arrangements had specified a gap of two months or until the end of June and said it now appeared unlikely that all the work could be accomplished satisfactorily in that time. The Government Team concurred and asked if it would be possible to use the summer holiday as a non-period in the same way that an election period would be treated.

4. The SDLP delegation said that if there was one gap before and another after the election then there should not be any objection in principle to a third gap being established. The DUP delegation pointed out that it was different having a gap for an impending election and having a gap for a holiday period. The SDLP delegation said that the majority of time in the last Talks was used discussing detail which should not be necessary now and therefore agreement should be possible in no more than two weeks.

5. The Government Team pointed out that the formulation of end of June or two months after the election was set on the basis of Talks beginning by the end of January. As five weeks of that timetable had gone it would be necessary to add this on at the end. In summary therefore, Talks could be expected to resume in the week commencing 27 April, continuing until the summer holidays (ie end of July). There would clearly be some flexibility if the Irish Government were content to have no Intergovernmental Conference before the Autumn. The UUP delegation said that parties could spend time before 27 April working on papers so that a prompt start could be made to business again.

6. Referring back to the discussion of press contact in the morning session, the Government Team said that an interview with the Secretary of State was to be published in the Irish Independent later in the week. This was a long-standing undertaking and none of the details of the present discussions would be included. The Alliance delegation made the point that there was a difference between breaching confidentiality in relation to the Talks and the legitimate and likely comments made in the course of an election campaign. It was generally agreed that if anyone involved in the Talks engaged gratuitously in attacking others in the process then this would have serious implications for the resumption of Talks.



I N C O N F I D E N C E

7. The DUP delegation said they were indebted to the Minister of State for making it clear that these were not peace talks. The Alliance delegation were of the view that if the Talks were not about peace then they were a waste of time. The SDLP delegation said that while they were not peace talks, the hope would be that they would provide a basis for peace. This was the first time for years that virtually all the people of Northern Ireland were represented round the negotiating table.

6. The Government Team asked if the official records of meetings last time had been helpful and should be continued. Those present agreed. The two delegations which had not given their nominees for the Business Committee in the morning session named their members - for the DUP Messrs Robinson and Vitty and for the Alliance Party Messrs Morrow and Close. It was agreed that because of family illness Mr Close could be substituted by Mr Neeson in the first instance. It was also agreed that each party could send any two representatives at any time, provided the Minister of State was advised. The Government Team suggested that it might be of assistance to maintain some continuity.

7. It was also agreed that parties could continue to draft documents for Strand One and may decide to meet informally; also that the Business Committee would meet immediately. In response to the DUP delegation, the Government Team said that delegates could use the accommodation at Parliament Buildings, at least until an election was called. A draft press statement was circulated to all present and agreed as amended (copy attached). The Government Team thanked those present for their attendance and for the spirit in which the various exchanges had taken place during the course of the day. It was agreed that the Business Committee would meet at 4.10 pm.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

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