

“ P R E S S R E L E A S E ”

19 March 1996

Day One could collapse

Democracy and Terrorism don't Mix - Alderdice

Following a meeting this morning between the Alliance Party and the British Government Team led by Michael Ancram, Alliance Leader, Dr John Alderdice said:

"In the consultation paper, there is a very real problem about Day One of the negotiations and how participation should be legitimised. If we do not get this right there will be no Day Two of Talks, and it will all have been a waste of time.

"We have had previous discussions with both the British & Irish Governments on the issue of how the parties should register a commitment to democracy. The Mitchell Body has already laid the ground rules. **Democracy and terrorism don't mix** and all parties to the negotiations, and most particularly those who have been previously outside the democratic process, must sign up for the Six Mitchell Principles. A firm and formal process of commitment to these principles must be set out.

"The Mitchell proposals on Decommissioning of Weapons must also be espoused by all the parties before moving onto the next stage. The International community has given us a clear view on this and it should not be fudged, otherwise Day One of the negotiations will be a fiasco. The two governments must clearly insist that everyone registers a commitment on these issues, right at the start.

"On the **Agenda** for political talks" added Dr Alderdice "this was decided as long ago as 1991 and we should not reopen this issue or we will be into another futile process of talks about talks on this as well.

"This consultation paper does point to potentially contentious issues and it may take some little time to resolve them.

"Having met the British Government team today, we are now seeking a meeting with the Irish Government to explore these matters further.

"Today, we also sought and received clarification on the functioning of the 'business' committee whose purpose is simply to provide liaison on the arrangements for discussion but not on the substance of the discussions. Some of the fears of Unionists in this regard may therefore be unnecessary."

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