



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/94/35
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.



*Mr. McLaughlin M. Keenan
13.3.92
To see please
10/13*

*(28)
PSS
Mr Nally
Aunt Small
Councillor A1
10/13*

IMMEDIATE

SECURE FAX NO. 314

TO: HQ FROM: BELFAST
FOR: A/Sec O hUiginn FROM: Joint Secretary
DATE: 10 March, 1992 PAGES: 2

Political Talks (2)

1. Robert Alston called just after midday with further information to my SF 310.

There was no serious discussion at any time of Strand Two or Three. There was a throw-away remark by Paisley that Strands Two and Three should not "cut across" Strand One which reflects the Unionist emphasis on Strand One and also their feeling that last time around, time which could have been spent on substantive talks in Strand One was spent discussing procedural issues concerning Strands Two and Three.

3. Brooke made a conscious decision not to raise the question of the Chairmanship of Strand Two but he continues to believe that Paisley will not object to Stephen. I mentioned that you would be sending us a paper for use as a joint instruction for an approach to Stephen in Canberra.
4. Articles Two and Three and the 1920 Act were mentioned briefly but there was no discussion worth recording.
5. In regard to Strand One, the understanding is the same as last summer in regard to the Chair (Secretary of State), rhythm of meetings (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday), delegation size (ten) and venue (Parliament Buildings, Belfast) although some meetings in London are not excluded. The Unionists hope that their desire for similar delegations will be accommodated in sub-groups which has been agreed may be used. London is not excluded as a venue for some meetings but it is clear that in the ordinary course they will be held in Parliament Buildings, Belfast.

6. Alston confirmed that the Unionists will not buy Brooke's idea of a double gap on either side of the summer break. In the business committee, however, "an expectation" developed that the gap would begin about 27 April and continue to mid August which would entail a period of three to four months. It was also "expected" that there might be flexibility on the part of the two Governments if there was a unanimous request for an extension from the party leaders. I queried Alston about these "expectations". He said that while there was no decision as such, this was the 'tenor of the discussion'. Obviously, we will need to reflect on this question.

*X
Strand 2
North/South
Strand 3
East/West*

smaller

7. It was agreed that it would be necessary to come back "briefly" to the question of general themes and realities which took up the substantive discussion last summer, before proceeding to specific issues. The programme of work submitted by the business committee is effectively the same as that circulated last summer. They did not try to define a new programme.
8. You will note that this time around Unionists did not require a "buffer" between the end of the Conference and the beginning of Strand One (the idea being that the Secretariat would need a couple of days to wrap-up a Conference). This was pointed out to Paisley who said that it had never been his position that a buffer was needed after a Conference, but it would be needed before a Conference. (This is nonsense but I am sure the explanation was designed to serve the purpose of a plenary meeting before the election is called. Paisley's position will have the effect of extending the gap slightly.)
9. The British side are now reviewing the position and expect to come back to us later this week with more refined ideas.