



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/97/44

**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.

Private Secretary,  
The Terminal will visit to note.  
S. Hare 4.12.95.

cc T Coiseach  
Mr Paddy Teeloh  
Mr Frank Murray  
Mr Sean O'Leary  
Mr Bob McCarty  
Mr Gine Hare

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**Lunch with Senator George Mitchell**

1. Senator Mitchell had suggested a chat before his departure for the United States, to sound out informally various aspects of the work of the International Body. This took place over lunch attended by, on the American side, Senator Mitchell, Ms. Martha Pope, Ms. Susan Brophy and, on the Irish side, Mr. Timothy Dalton, Mr. Brendan Scannell and the undersigned.
2. Senator Mitchell sketched out his proposed timetable: He would be meeting privately with his fellow members in New York on the 9th December. They would propose to have the first hearing from the Body on December 15th through December 18th. He would return for meetings for two days around the 10th January. If that did not complete the work of the Body, he would return sometime after the 15th January. (He has a commitment in Hong Kong on the 15th).
3. Senator Mitchell said he was anxious to meet the two Governments on day one. He wondered whether this could be done in Belfast.
4. We said that the location was something Ministers would wish to view from the political angle. We gave an informal steer that it might be preferable to meet the Irish Government in Dublin, having regard not just to the symbolism, but also the practical involvement of officials from different Departments, etc. Consideration could be extended to making air transport available. There might also be other parties who would prefer to meet the Body in Dublin rather than Belfast.

I'm not  
sure we  
are right  
here.



5. Senator Mitchell indicated privately that he had a lengthy briefing from Rod Lyne in Downing Street, which put a firmly security oriented spin on the work of the Body (listing inventories, mechanisms, etc.). He suggested it would be important that we should get the Irish point of view across to the other members of the Body.
  
6. Mr. Dalton briefed Senator Mitchell in general terms on current security perceptions of paramilitary arsenals, etc. The Irish side generally emphasised the political dimension of the Body's work. We were talking about voluntary decommissioning, which required the cooperation of the paramilitaries, and a context which enabled them to meet our goals. The Irish side said that the justifiable concern to ensure agreement before President Clinton's visit had led to a brief for the Body that was somewhat less clear-cut than we would have wished, particularly in terms of agreement between the two Governments. We stressed to Senator Mitchell that the Communiqué gave him independence and a remit to consult widely. Rather than getting drawn into procedural arguments about what was or was not included, he should take his cue from the substance of the proposals and comments submitted to him. Their likely range would enable him to draw his own conclusions. Senator Mitchell said this was very much how he operated when a judge, but indicated again that other Body members might have somewhat different views.
  
7. The Irish side stressed that the purpose of the exercise, in line with the spirit of President Clinton's visit, was to widen the space for discussion and to take people off hooks. The very first test the Senator should apply to the work of the Body was the hippocratic one of doing no harm, i.e. however it was achieved, people should be given the space to get off hooks, rather than be impaled more firmly by the report. We suggested that the creation of

Good  
Thinking



confidence was the political key to the whole exercise. This approach enabled the Body to get to the core of the issue, rather than the mechanics of decommissioning, which were relatively easy to resolve once the political will was there. It still remained likely that decommissioning would be arrived at through politics, rather than vice versa.

8. Senator Mitchell asked for our views on a number of other points: He felt he would wish to set up an "0800" number so that anyone who wanted to get in touch with the Body would be able to do so. We agreed it would be important to forestall any suggestion that the Body was inaccessible. The telephone line was a good idea. They could also consider appealing publicly for submissions, etc.
9. Senator Mitchell said that President Clinton had received the suggestion that it would be important that the Body should hear from the victims. We felt this was a matter for the Body itself. However, it would be important to ensure that it met representatives of all categories of victims, and not just those (as had apparently been suggested) of paramilitary violence, since otherwise the Body would be subject to criticism as being selective.
10. Senator Mitchell said his intention was to keep the transactions of the Body largely private, and to confine press engagement to protocol-type announcements. We agreed that it would be important to ensure that those who wanted to give evidence in confidence could do so.
11. Senator Mitchell said he would want to write as of Monday to the appropriate parties to invite submissions. He asked for, and we undertook to give him, a list of these parties.

12. He indicated, again drawing on his experience as a judge, that he would be asking the Governments to give him their own ideas on what the report should contain.
  
13. There was a discussion of various practical aspects of the operation of the Body. Senator Mitchell indicated that he wanted it to be done as economically as possible. It was agreed there would be further contacts with Ms. Pope, and possibly Mr. Pisorsky (?) of Senator Mitchell's staff to work these out.

Sean Ó hUiginn

4 December 1995