



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/99/18

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.

Confidential

Tadiseank (3)
You know the
guys of this but
may be interested in this
report-
Multi-Party Talks
Daily Report - 23 July 1997
h [signature]
25-7-97

PSM; PSMOS; PSS;
S/S Ó hUiginn; Mr Teahon;
Mr Dalton; Dr Mansergh;
Ambassadors Ottawa and
Helsinki; Counsellors A-1 Div;
Section: Box

1. **In summary:**

- Voting on the two Governments' paper and on Unionist amendments took place during a three-hour Plenary this afternoon;
- As expected, sufficient consensus was not achieved on the joint paper. The three Unionist parties voted against while the two Loyalist parties abstained;
- The Plenary will reconvene briefly next Monday afternoon. It is expected to adjourn from then until 15 September at the latest. The Chairman will consult bilaterally with the parties during Monday with a view to proposing 9 September for the resumption;
- Following the Plenary, the two Governments issued a joint statement which made clear that the talks process is continuing, reiterated the commitment to substantive political negotiations starting on 15 September and signalled a meeting between the Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State next Tuesday to begin the necessary preparations.

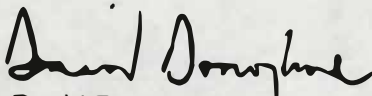
2. The Government delegation today was led by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, who was accompanied by the Minister of State. We had various contacts with the British Government, the Chairmen, the SDLP and a number of other delegations.
3. The morning was devoted to the preparation of a joint statement for issue by the two Governments following the Plenary and general tactical planning. Responding to a British proposal that the Independent Commission might be established in the short term whether or not the UUP voted with us today, the Minister for Foreign Affairs commented that it would be absurd to reward Trimble in this fashion for a failure to support our paper. The matter was not pursued by the British side.
4. The Secretary of State did not press for a postponement of today's vote. She also saw no value in a resumed Plenary next week. It was agreed that there would be merit in the Plenary meeting shortly before 15 September in order to allow time for a possible resolution on decommissioning prior to the beginning of substantive talks (on the benign hypothesis that a more constructive UUP stance on this issue might emerge over the summer). It was also agreed that bilateral contacts with the parties in the interim could be used to gather views on the mechanics (personnel etc) of the Commission.

[Handwritten signature]

5. Opening this afternoon's Plenary, Senator Mitchell proposed a voting procedure which would deal first with proposals submitted by delegations, then with proposed amendments to the Governments' paper and finally with the paper itself. The UDP tabled a motion to postpone the latter vote to a later date (in the hope that greater consensus might be achievable in due course).
6. In an opening comment agreed beforehand with us, the British Government indicated that, while certain of the proposed amendments presented real difficulties of principle, others reflected an intention with which the Governments had some sympathy but which, in our view, was already reflected in the most appropriate way in the joint paper.
7. Voting proceeded in a relatively orderly fashion. Little use was made of the time allocated for statements for or against the proposed amendments. In most instances, the proposed amendments were supported by the DUP, UKUP and UUP but opposed by everyone else (apart from Alliance, who abstained). In five instances, the two Governments abstained by prior agreement.
8. The UDP effort to have the vote on the joint paper postponed failed. In this vote, the two Loyalist parties abstained, the three Unionist parties voted against and all others supported the paper.
9. Noting that no proposition had attracted sufficient consensus, the Chairman proposed bilateral consultations next week between the Chair and delegations, and among the latter, on how to proceed. He suggested an adjournment of the Plenary until 9 September, the intervening period to be used for preparatory work by delegations (to whom, incidentally, the same regime of allowances would be paid as during the summer recess last year - a gesture aimed at the smaller parties in particular).
10. The DUP (Paisley and Robinson) presumed that the discussion of decommissioning would be resumed when the Plenary met again in September. They saw no prospect of this issue being resolved before then. They and the UKUP (Wilson) represented the decision to launch substantive talks on 15 September as a conspiracy to get Sinn Féin into the process via "leap-frogging" tactics. The UUP (Empey) objected to the proposal to advance the Plenary date from 15 to 9 September and said that the date for the Plenary should not be settled until after consultations on this subject next week. Alliance and the PUP suggested that the timing of the Plenary be made subject to the call of the Chair.
11. The DUP then walked out, claiming that the British Government had surrendered to "IRA blackmail". They were followed fifteen minutes later by the UKUP. Citing similar concerns, Conor Cruise O'Brien said his party was withdrawing in order to inform the people of Northern Ireland about the attempt being made behind their backs to inveigle Sinn Féin into the talks.
12. The SDLP lifted the tone of the debate with two impressive interventions. Seamus

Mallon balanced an acknowledgement of the moral and political imperatives for decommissioning against a recognition that this could only happen on a voluntary basis and in the context of an inclusive process. John Hume categorically denied that any secret deals lay behind the IRA ceasefire and emphasised the importance of Sinn Féin subscription to the Mitchell Principles as a test of peaceful intent.

13. Senator Mitchell suggested an adjournment of the Plenary subject to the call of the Chair next week, with 9 September to be fixed in the event of no Plenary being agreed for next week. The UUP continued to resist any decision being taken at this stage in favour of 9 September.
14. There was a brief interval for consultations on this point with the Governments and other delegations. The Senator supported the UUP pressure for a Plenary next week (as he had done in earlier contacts with the Governments). On the resumption, it was agreed that the Plenary would meet briefly at 4pm next Monday for the purpose of agreeing, on the strength of consultations earlier in the day between the Chairmen and delegations, that the Plenary would reconvene in September - not later than 15 September and possibly earlier, depending on the outcome of the consultations.
15. The Minister for Foreign Affairs and the Secretary of State subsequently issued an agreed joint statement, the text of which was forwarded earlier.



David Donoghue

23 July 1997

Joint statement by the British and Irish Governments

The talks process goes on. Both Governments are firmly committed to substantive political negotiations starting on 15 September. We will hold to that and will take all necessary steps to ensure it happens.

We want these negotiations to be as inclusive as possible. We will continue to work with all the parties to achieve that.

We regret that, more than a year since they began, the negotiations have yet to move out of the opening Plenary because of the decommissioning issue.

The best and only realistic way to resolve the issue is on the basis of implementing all aspects of the Mitchell report. The two Governments' joint proposals offer a fair and balanced approach to this. The proposals have been extensively clarified, in an effort to show how they met all sides' concerns. Both Governments stand by these proposals.

We will continue to work with all the parties to prepare for the start of political negotiations on 15 September.

Following Monday's Plenary, the Secretary of State and the Minister for Foreign Affairs will meet on Tuesday to begin the necessary preparations for the start of substantive negotiations on 15 September.

We invite all parties, in the context of their own preparatory work, to consult with us during this period in whatever form may be convenient.

23 July 1997