

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

RECORD OF A SUB-PLenary MEETING BETWEEN THE MINISTER OF STATE
AND REPRESENTATIVES OF THE FOUR PARTICIPATING PARTIES
ON THE AFTERNOON OF 29 MAY

Government Team

Minister of State
Mr Thomas

Talks Secretariat

Mr D J R Hill
Mr Hallett

Party Representatives

Mr Close (APNI)
Mr Haughey (SDLP)
Mr Robinson (UDUP)
Mr Cunningham (UUP)

The meeting began at 14.30 and concluded at 15.10. At the beginning of the meeting, copies of the revised workplan were circulated.

2. The Minister of State said that in drafting the revised workplan he had sought to reflect points made in the morning discussion. He understood that Mr Haughey would have a particular problem with item (i) in the addendum. He invited comments.

3. Mr Robinson asked for clarification of the meaning of (i) as now drafted. The Minister of State replied that he was trying to reconcile the view that it was essential to have reference to the constitutional question in the document but without using the term "status", which caused particular difficulty for the SDLP. He had sought a neutral formulation to reflect this. Mr Robinson indicated that he was not happy with the revised formulation. Mr Haughey commented that the term "constitutional status" had a particular connotation since it was constantly used by Unionists, which made it difficult for the SDLP to accept.

4. After some discussion, Mr Cunningham proposed that (i) should simply refer to "the constitutional position of Northern Ireland".

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5. Mr Close commented that it was important to get down to issues of substance, since at present the discussion was still "in the area of semantics".

6. The Minister of State said that he would make a judgment to include a reference to the constitutional position in the amended form proposed by Mr Cunningham. He recognised that this would be difficult for the SDLP but his impression was that their problem related to the inclusion of any reference to this matter, not to the particular form of words used. The revised formulation was a neutral statement, which did not pre-judge the outcome of the discussions. He hoped it would be acceptable on that basis.

7. Mr Haughey said that he would put the amended formulation to his party leader but made clear that it was likely to be the SDLP view that the workplan should be confined to the first page, without the addendum.

8. Mr Robinson asked for clarification of the reference to "relationships within the Northern Ireland community" in (ii). The Minister of State replied that this was intended to cover such matters as the fact that judgments about people in Northern Ireland were not made on them as individuals but on the basis of labels. These labels tended to have overriding influence in matters such as employment. Mr Haughey added that this item related to the fact that Northern Ireland was a deeply divided community, which necessitated consideration of the power balance between the two sides of the community and how this might be given effect in institutional arrangements. Mr Robinson indicated that he was content with this clarification.

9. Mr Cunningham sought clarification of (vii) and (viii). On (vii) he asked whether it was intended to include the possibility of a Bill of Rights. The Minister of State replied that this was the case. On (viii) Mr Cunningham asked whether the reference to validation envisaged several different

validatory processes. The Minister of State replied that it was included merely to indicate that the question of validating Strand One issues needed to be considered in the course of Strand One.

11. The Minister of State asked whether the document, as amended, and subject to the SDLP caveat on (i), was now generally acceptable. Mr Haughey replied that it remained his view that the addendum was not helpful for the SDLP and would best be omitted. This would also probably be his party leader's conclusion.

12. Mr Robinson said that having taken sounding within the Unionist Delegation, the general view was that the addendum might be better on its own without page one.

13. Mr Cunningham sought and received confirmation that the addendum did not preclude change in the list of subjects or the order in which they were dealt with.

14. Mr Robinson asked about the timetable for future developments. The Minister of State replied that amended copies of the workplan would be passed to the party representatives as soon as they were available with a request that they give the earliest possible indication of whether the text was acceptable to their Delegation. Assuming a positive response, the workplan would come into force as soon as the move to plenary discussions took place. He hoped that a response would be received within the day, though he recognised that this might pose practical difficulties for the SDLP.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

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WORKPLAN FOR STRAND ONE

1. Opening Statement by the Secretary of State.
2. Presentation by the Alliance Party.
3. Presentation by the SDLP.
4. Presentation by the UDUP.
5. Presentation by the UUP.
6. These presentations should be by written statements to which parties can speak and on which they can be questioned. It is envisaged that in the resulting discussion the general principles and perceived political realities and requirements will be comprehensively aired. From this it is expected that common themes will emerge which will form the basis for further discussions.
7. At this stage it will be necessary to consider the institutional implications of these discussions and to address specific proposals which may be tabled by any of the participants. Issues to which specific proposals may be addressed are likely to include those in the attached Addendum.
8. Elements of this workplan may need to be adjusted in the light of the discussions which may suggest new issues or approaches.

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ADDENDUM TO WORKPLAN FOR STRAND ONE

Specific issues are likely to include:

- (i) the constitutional position of Northern Ireland
- (ii) relationships within the Northern Ireland community
- (iii) the nature of institutional arrangements within Northern Ireland, including institutions, if any, at province wide level and the relationship between them and other institutions, such as local authorities, within Northern Ireland. (Under this heading it would be necessary to consider, among other things, the extent of powers to be transferred - including any role in respect of security - and the way in which they should operate and be financed.)
- (iv) the relationship between any institutions within Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State and the UK Government and Parliamentary system
- (v) the role of the UK Government and Parliament in respect of matters which are not brought within the responsibilities of institutions within Northern Ireland (including legislative procedures at Westminster).
- (vi) the relationship, if any, between any institutions within Northern Ireland and the European Community
- (vii) the arrangements for the protection of individual and community rights

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- (viii) arrangements for validating the outcome of the talks process as a whole insofar as the issues for discussions in strand one are concerned.

This list is not comprehensive; other issues may emerge in discussion.

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