

RESTRICTED



FROM: ALAN SMYTH
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
DATE: 17 APRIL 1998

CC: PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Thomas (B&L)
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Steele
Mr Bell
Mr McCusker
Mr Stephens
Mr Watkins
PS/Mr Kelly
Mr Beeton
Mr Brooker
Mrs Brown
Dr Canavan
Mr Carson
Mr Hill
Mr Ferguson
Mr Maccabe
Mr Whysall
Mr Johnston

AM
21/4

PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

FORUM MEETING - 17 APRIL 1998

1. This is to provide a report on today's meeting of the Forum, the 38th meeting of the new session and the 70th meeting since its inception.
2. A very trying day for both David Trimble and the Chairman that showed the growing gulf between the UUP and DUP. The latter were exceptionally rude throughout, continually heckling and laughing at those speakers (David Trimble in particular) who spoke in favour of the agreement. Indeed at times it became very difficult for the Chairman to control the business as members resorted to shouting at each other across the chamber.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

3. The Chairman announced at the beginning of the meeting that next Friday (24 April) was likely to be the last day the Forum would meet. He then called on David Trimble to propose the motion that the Forum takes note of the Castle Buildings Agreement.

4. Mr Trimble said that the UUP had kept all its promises and had achieved all its objectives in signing the agreement. It had been a disaster for Sinn Fein - they had failed to meet any of their objectives, Northern Ireland remained firmly within the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland was going to remove its territorial claim. Furthermore, the UUP had fought for and won concessions on the extent of the use of the Irish language and had secured a balanced equality agenda. Mr Trimble said that the comments emanating from the DUP were without foundation and the people would not be fooled by a party that had deserted the battlefield. He lambasted the DUP for having no alternative to what the agreement was proposing.

5. Dr Paisley then proposed the DUP's amendment. He claimed that when treachery took the stage secrecy was always its garment. He said he had acquired a copy of Senator Mitchell's original document and would be making it public so everyone could see how close the text was to that in the final Agreement. He then proceeded to launch scathing attacks on the absence of decommissioning, the proposed changes to security and policing and the plans to release prisoners. He concluded by expressing in a very loud voice that the document damned the UUP.

6. Lord Alderdice said that Dr Paisley had decided to oppose the agreement long before it had been signed. However, it would not stop the DUP from taking their seats and salaries. At the end of the day they knew in their hearts that the people would vote to accept the Agreement.

RESTRICTED

RESTRICTED

7. The morning concluded with other speakers (Pearl Sagar, Hugh Smyth, John White, Malachi Curran, David Ervine among others) taking the opportunity to speak in favour of the Agreement.

8. The afternoon session was monopolised by the DUP who seemed to be having a private competition to see which of their number could be most horrified by the contents of the agreement. All attacked the release of prisoners and the absence of decommissioning. The UUP absented themselves to attend a party executive meeting at 3pm and Alliance members seemed to decide that they did not want to be in the chamber for the vote.

9. The Chairman concluded the meeting by taking a vote on the DUP amendment. It was carried by 23 votes (all DUP) to 2 (Hugh Smyth, PUP and John White, UDP). However, the Chairman ruled that the amendment could not be held to be representative of the majority of the population and struck down the motion.

10. The Forum adjourned at 3.55pm.

[signed. ADS]

ALAN SMYTH
PB 28166

RESTRICTED

MOTIONS

1. The Ulster Unionist Party proposed the following motion:-

That this Forum takes note of the Castle Buildings Agreement published on 10 April 1998.

Amendment (DUP)

That this Forum opposes the Castle Buildings Agreement published on 10 April 1998 and repudiates:-

- guaranteed places for IRA/Sinn Fein's Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness as part of a cabinet power sharing government of Northern Ireland;
- nationalist parties being given an absolute veto within the Assembly on any key decisions;
- the creation of an All-Ireland Ministerial Council with full Framework Document powers of consultation, harmonisation and executive decision taking over a wide range of subjects;
- the setting up of a series of all-Ireland, cross-border implementation bodies capable of dealing with any function of the Northern Ireland Assembly;
- the recreating and renaming of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference as the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference to "intensify co-operation between the two Governments on the all-island or cross-border aspects of non-devolved matters including rights, justice, prisons and policing". The Maryfield Secretariat is also recreated;
- the abolition of the Government of Ireland Act 1920 established as the supreme authority of the British Parliament over Northern Ireland;
- the failure to require the handing over of illegal terrorist weaponry;

RESTRICTED

- the release of terrorist prisoners, including murderers, within a period of two years;
- the planned destruction of the RUC;

and urges the people of Northern Ireland to vote "No" to secure their future within the Union.

RESTRICTED

© PRONI CENT/3/270A