

RECORD OF A PLENARY MEETING HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS ON  
17 JUNE 1991Government Team

Secretary of State  
Minister of State  
PUS  
Mr Fell  
Mr Pilling  
Mr Thomas  
Mr McNeill

Alliance Party

Dr Alderdice  
Mr Close  
Mr Neeson  
Mrs Bell  
Mr Morrow  
Mr McBride  
Mr Dickson

UDUP

Dr Paisley  
Mr Robinson  
Mr McCrea  
Mr Wilson  
Mr Gibson  
Mr Dodds  
Mr Campbell

Talks Secretariat

Mr D J R Hill  
Mr May  
Mr Rodell

SDLP

Mr Hume  
Mr Mallon  
Mr McGrady  
Dr Hendron  
Mrs Rodgers  
Mr Gallagher  
Mr Haughey

UUP

Mr Molyneaux  
Mr Cunningham  
Mr Nicholson  
Mr Trimble  
Mr Empey  
Mr Smyth  
Mr Maginnis

Also Present

Mr Pawson

1. The second plenary session of the afternoon of 17 June 1991 opened at 1600. The UDUP delegation asked whether it would be possible to intensify the talks process to make up for lost time. The Government Team suggested this be referred to a business committee under the Minister of State's chairmanship with a single representative from each of the party delegations. It was agreed prior to the end of this session that the parties' representatives would be Mr Robinson, Mr Smyth, Mr Haughey and Mr Close.

2. Mr Hume made an opening statement on behalf of the SDLP delegation, the text of which is attached. The fuller position paper circulated during the session by the SDLP delegation is also attached.

3. It was agreed that, to enable proper consideration of the SDLP paper, there should be an opportunity at the start of the following day's session for the parties to seek further clarification. Initial clarifications were then sought.

4. The UDUP delegation asked whether the SDLP thought that Northern Ireland would have status outside the United Kingdom in the foreseeable future. The SDLP delegation responded by explaining their position paper was an analysis of the problem as they saw it. It was important for the different parties to reach agreement on what the problem was, before producing ideas which might lead towards a resolution. Past approaches that had not had the agreement of both Unionists and Nationalists had failed.

5. The UDUP delegation sought clarification for the assertion in the SDLP paper that the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which gave the Irish Government the right to involve itself in the affairs of Northern Ireland, provided a framework under which to work towards progress. The SDLP delegation commented that Nationalists within Northern Ireland wanted to ensure their rights were protected and the Agreement provided one way in which that was possible. The UDUP and UUP delegations commented that they had not been consulted about the Agreement, nor had they agreed to it.

6. The UDUP delegation asked a series of questions about the decline in the Protestant population in the Republic of Ireland, and contrasted this with the rising Catholic population in Northern Ireland since 1921, linking the figures to allegations of discriminatory practices in the respective jurisdictions. The SDLP delegation said they recognised in their paper that Protestants felt the Republic of Ireland threatened their ethos and way of life. These talks gave an opportunity for new relationships to be forged to allow both Protestant and Catholic ways of life to be preserved.

7. The UUP delegation asked for clarification on paragraph 7 of the SDLP paper which suggested the Anglo-Irish Agreement was needed to give the Irish Government power to protect Northern Ireland Nationalists but not those in Great Britain. The SDLP delegation commented that the experience of Nationalists in Northern Ireland over the previous 70 years was the basis upon which they sought protection for their rights.

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

8. The Government Team sought clarification on whether British and Irish national identities were mutually exclusive. The SDLP delegation agreed they were not, but said that it was not a question of finding a middle ground, but of recognising the traditions of each community and accommodating the two identities.

9. The Alliance Party delegation asked whether there was a conflict between an aspiration for a sovereign independent state (such as Nationalists had historically sought) and a more integrated Europe of regions. The SDLP delegation responded that the European Community had changed the nature of sovereignty and signalled an advance on the nation-state concept. Northern Ireland could take its place in the vanguard of this advance if the talks proved successful.

10. The UDUP delegation asked whether it was possible to live in the United Kingdom and not be Unionists. The SDLP delegation agreed that it was.

11. A press statement describing the day's business was agreed.

12. It was agreed the UUP delegation would make their initial presentation before the UDUP for strand one and vice versa for strand two.

13. The SDLP and UDUP delegations asked whether they would have the opportunity to seek clarification on the Government Team's opening statement made shortly before lunch. The Government Team suggested that this could most conveniently be done as the specific issues concerned came up for discussion.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

*J. Humes Speech & analysis doc.*