

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

RECORD OF A PLENARY SESSION HELD AT PARLIAMENT BUILDING ON
MONDAY 24 JUNE 1991

<u>Government Team</u>	<u>Alliance Party</u>	<u>UDUP</u>
Secretary of State	Dr Alderdice	Dr Paisley
Minister of State	Mr Close	Rev McCrea
Mr Fell	Mr Neeson	Mr Robinson
Mr Pilling	Mrs Bell	Mr Campbell
Mr Thomas	Mr Dickson	Mr Dodds
Mr McNeill	Mr McBride	Mr McClure
		Mr Vitty
<u>Talks Secretariat</u>	<u>SDLP</u>	<u>UUP</u>
Mr Hill	Mr Hume	Mr Molyneaux
Mr Pope	Mr McGrady	Mr McGimpsey
	Mr Mallon	Mr Allan
<u>Also Present</u>	Mr Farran	Mr Cunningham
Mr Pawson	Mr Feely	Mr Empey
	Mr Haughey	
	Dr Hendron	

A plenary meeting of Strand One of the talks process took place in Parliament Buildings between 16.08 and 16.40 on 24 June.

2. In response to questions from the UDUP for clarification of the Secretary of State's opening statement, the following points were made

(a) Paragraph 12

A successful outcome of the talks process would not, of itself, solve Northern Ireland's security problems but would increase the pressure on those who were presently acting outside the law.

(b) Paragraph 14

The omission of a specific mention of the constitutional status of Northern Ireland was not significant - the Secretary of State's opening statement was not a position paper in the sense that the papers put forward by the parties were. It had been intended as part of the launch of the process and was not a definitive statement of Government policy in all areas. The three most succinct statements of HMG's position on the constitutional status of the Province were to be found in paragraphs 8 to 11 of the UDUP's own position paper.

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(c) Paragraph 15

The question of the most appropriate moment for representatives of the Government of the Republic of Ireland to join the Talks process had been addressed in the Secretary of State's statement to the House of Commons of 26 March which was, and remained, the definitive statement on the issue. It was not the case that the Independent Chairman nominated for Strand Two had been informed of a date on which the first meeting of Strand Two would take place. The transitional arrangements from Strand One to Strand Two remained as set out in paragraph 23 of the Government's opening statement and in the statement made by the Secretary of State on 26 March.

(d) Paragraph 16

The phrase "important shifts in public and political opinion" did not call into question the ability of elected representatives in Northern Ireland to accurately reflect public views, nor their success in doing so. The Government Team had no doubt about the accuracy with which elected representatives reflected views. The wording reflected the fact that Government Ministers travelled extensively within the Province and received views from many individuals - a distillation of these views suggested that a significant number of people in Northern Ireland wished the Talks process well and hoped for a new agreement (or agreements) which would make the next twenty years better than and different from the previous twenty years.

(e) Paragraph 18

The "various principles" referred to in line two of paragraph 18 were that any new agreement must be stable, durable and command widespread agreement across the community if it were to work.

(f) Paragraph 19

The "powers and responsibility" referred to in that paragraph would not necessarily be identical to those enjoyed by the 1974 Assembly - this was, however, one possibility for discussion.

Any new arrangement would not work if the three principles set out earlier were not met. HMG would not lend its name to proposals that would not survive their first test since any arrangement that did not meet these principles and which failed would not be good for Northern Ireland. In considering whether the three principles had been met, HMG would have to establish whether any new agreement was both appropriate and fair to both sides of the community.

Whatever the perceptions of the success or failure of the Anglo Irish Agreement were, the principles set out for any new Agreement reflected the Government's view of the need for the future.

(g) Paragraph 19

HMG could play its part in discussing future structures but could not direct what should emerge. This would have to emerge from the four constitutional parties since any arrangement set in place solely or mainly by HMG would be condemned on that basis. While the Anglo-Irish Agreement was a fact of life, both the British and Irish Governments were willing to contemplate new arrangements and agreements which could form a basis for constructing workmanlike sets of relationships. This would be the criteria against which the results of the present process would be judged.

(h) Paragraph 21

Responding to the UDUP comparison of the reference to "quick judgments" in paragraph 21 to the "quick judgment" which HMG had allegedly made in agreeing to an IGC on 16 July, the Government Team noted that this issue would be discussed between the Secretary of State and party leaders later in the day.

- Paragraph 25

The Government Team noted that, while security issues had been addressed by all parties in their position papers, and while it might be appropriate for discussion during the process, certain issues which might arise in any discussion of security matters might fall outside the sole competence of the Secretary of State. Similarly, the question of how any new administration might relate to the European Community was one that could transcend the Secretary of State's ability to judge since it would be a matter for HMG. So far as the economy was concerned, some form of revenue raising power for any new administration was not ruled out.

3. The Government Team confirmed that the Secretary of State intended to meet party leaders during the course of the afternoon. The Business Committee might then meet to discuss working arrangements up to 16 July while the remainder of the delegations continued in plenary session. That plenary session might agree a draft press statement.

4. Finally, the Government Team drew attention to a typographical error in the UDUP position paper which had referred to the Secretary of State's speech at Bangor having taken place in 1989 - it had in fact been delivered in 1990. The Government Team noted the UDUP's point that they had merely been quoting from an NI Information Services document when referring to the speech.

TALKS SECRETARIAT

June 1991