

**DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF OPENING PLENARY SESSION -
WEDNESDAY 30 OCTOBER 1996 (10.00)**

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
Senator Mitchell	British Government	Alliance Party
Mr Holkeri	Irish Government	Labour
General de Chastelain		Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
		Progressive Unionist Party
		Social Democratic and Labour Party
		Ulster Democratic Party
		Ulster Democratic Unionist Party
		United Kingdom Unionist Party
		Ulster Unionist Party

1. The Chairman convened the meeting at 10.00. He reminded participants that the agreed order of business was for the Alliance Party to make its presentation on decommissioning; then the Ulster Unionist Party would be afforded the opportunity to make a presentation, followed by the British Government presentation. He also reminded participants that all had agreed to submit written presentations to the Chairmen's office by Friday. The presentations would be copied and circulated to all participants. The following week would be devoted to consideration of the presentations. He proposed that participants should aim to complete their consideration of all the presentations next week and that in order to achieve this target the sessions should be as long as necessary, since it was important for every participant to have a full opportunity to elaborate on their own presentations and proposals and to comment on and question the other parties on their presentations. He proposed that Monday's session convene at noon in order to give parties time to complete their deliberations on the presentations and that the Tuesday and Wednesday sessions should each commence at 10.00am.

2. The UDP expressed support for the proposal but requested that the Monday session commence at 13.00. The Chairman asked if there was any objection to the UDP proposal. It was agreed that the Monday session would commence at 13.00. The UKUP, in relation to the Chairman's proposal that the session continue "as long as necessary" asked if it had not been agreed that sessions would not continue beyond 18.00. It was agreed that there was no firm decision on this point and the Chairman stressed that, given the importance of the issue of decommissioning and the need to give participants full opportunity to explore the other parties presentations and the desirability of completing the process next week, the participants should be prepared to consider extending the sessions beyond the normally accepted finishing time.

3. The DUP said that there might well be difficulty on Tuesday when there was important Parliamentary business. The Chairman said that as always sympathy would be given to the needs of those representatives with parliamentary commitments. The UKUP also expressed a reservation on the conflict with parliamentary commitment. The Chairman asked if there was agreement to extend Monday's session until 20.00 or 21.00. The UDP said that a number of participants had duties elsewhere on Monday evening but that the party was prepared to field a team. The DUP stated that it was prepared to continue until 20.00 on Monday. The SDLP acknowledged the parliamentary commitments of the various parties including its own but stressed the need to hold to schedule.

4. The Chairman proposed that the sessions for next week should be:

Monday	13.00	-	20.00
Tuesday	10.00	-	18.00
Wednesday	10.00	-	18.00

with the target of completing deliberation on all of the decommissioning presentations. Every effort would be made to

accommodate the MP's commitments on Tuesday. After some further discussion this proposal was agreed by all participants.

5. The Chairman again reminded the participants of their agreement to submit written presentations by Friday and then invited the Alliance Party to make its oral presentation on decommissioning. The presentation was completed at 11.35 and the Chairman proposed a short break but first enquired of the UUP about its intentions. The UUP said that it would make a presentation but that it was unlikely that it could be concluded before the lunch interval and proposed that half of the presentation be made before lunch and half thereafter. The Chairman proposed that there should now be a break, that the session reconvene at 12.00, that the UUP deliver part of its presentation until 13.00, that the meeting adjourn again for lunch and reconvene at 14.00 when the UUP would complete its presentation, to be followed immediately by the British Government presentation. This was agreed.

6. The DUP inquired if the offer made by the Alliance Party during its presentation to release copies of it now, applied to the other participants. The Alliance Party said that four copies of its presentation had been given to the Independent Chairmen with once copy for duplication and circulation to the other participants. The Chairman said that he was advised that the necessary copies were now available and had been circulated. He then adjourned the discussion until 12.00 noon.

(By agreement of the participants, the facilities of the Chairmen's office were made available for circulation of documents submitted by participants.)

Independent Chairmen Notetakers
31 October 1996

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