



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Meeting with Eddie McGrady
Downpatrick, 19 June 1990

SDLP Meeting with the Secretary of State

1. McGrady was irritated to have missed the latest SDLP meeting with the Secretary of State. (He blamed Hume for mishandling the arrangements). He had subsequently been briefed by NIO officials - who told him that Mallon's tone at the meeting had been notably "unfriendly".

Secretariat

2. He was very concerned by Mallon's weekend comments about the Secretariat and Unionist counter-claims. He felt that Mallon's blunt language had put the talks process at risk and exposed the SDLP to accusations of attempting to sabotage the process. McGrady believes that the Unionist leaders have not been entirely honest with their own followers about how much they have ceded on the Secretariat; the claims made by Mallon enhance their vulnerability and may create pressure on them to renege on the bargain struck with Mr. Brooke.
3. In discussing the formula proposed by Brooke on the Secretariat, McGrady was quite sure that it would not be problematic for SDLP supporters. The "average punter", he said, needs to know that the Secretariat is still there and that it is operational but is not unduly bothered about the precise formula governing its operation. There is confidence in the Irish Government and the SDLP leadership to defend the nationalist interest and - at least in the talks about talks phase - a willingness to leave the detail of the negotiation in their hands. (Note: this is a considerably more relaxed attitude on McGrady's part than was evident at our last meeting.)

Comment by Molyneaux

4. McGrady was puzzled by a brief exchange he had with Molyneaux in Westminster last week. Molyneaux asked McGrady if he had the impression that attempts were being made to "long-finger" the talks and went on to express disquiet at the current suggestion that talks would not get underway until September; his own view, Molyneaux said, was that substantive talks should begin as soon as possible.

Timing and format of talks

5. McGrady expressed himself uneasy about what he perceives as a subtle change in the British approach - he feels they are edging away from the idea of an early agenda-setting exercise and concentrating instead on the concept of "organic" growth (He is worried that this might mean, in practice, that only the first couple of agenda items would be established in advance with subsequent items left to emerge as the talks proceeded). In his view, it is crucially important that a full agenda, covering the three sets of talks, be established in advance "so that everyone knows where we're going".
6. He is conscious of the problem of constructing a common agenda that would lead to the early opening of North/South talks and at the same time would achieve the desired "latticing" or interlinking effect between the three sets of talks. He argued that, even if a timetable for the gap were not spelled out publicly in advance, there would have to be a clear agreement with all the parties as to what that timetable should be (otherwise there is a risk of a Unionist filibuster on the first one or two items).

7. He made some suggestions, on an illustrative basis, as to what the initial agenda items might be and how these might be linked to a timetable. (For ease of reference, these suggestions - with a timetable which reflects the general thrust of McGrady's comments - are set out in tabular form in Annex 1). He underlined that, in the internal discussion on items 1 (presentation of positions) and 4 (possible structures) the SDLP would place a very strong emphasis on the North-South dimension, thus preparing the way for a natural transition of the discussion on all issues to the North/South framework.
8. The term "other signatory of the Anglo-Irish Agreement" is used in describing agenda items 3 and 5; McGrady was attached to this term on the grounds that (a) it would be easier for Unionists to swallow than a simple reference to the Irish Government and (b) at the same time, it would signal that the Government is involved in all aspects of this process as of right by virtue of the fact that we are co-signators of the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

AA.

A. Anderson
20 June 1990

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c.c. P.S.M., Mr. Nally, P.S.S., Mr. Gallagher, Mr. Matthews,
Mr. Brosnan, Joint Secretary, Mr. Collins.

Agenda/Timeframe

Item No.	Title	Forum	Timetable
1.	Presentation of positions by the parties.	Internal talks.	Weeks one and two.
2.	Discussion of common themes emerging from opening presentations.	Internal talks.	Weeks three and four.
3.	Discussion of these themes with other signatory of Anglo-Irish Agreement.	North/South talks.	To begin in week five; if desired, to continue concurrently with item 4.
4.	Initial discussion of possible new structures (taking account of discussion on items 1-3).	Internal talks.	To begin in week seven; if desired, to continue concurrently with item 5.
5.	Discussion of structures with other signatory of Anglo-Irish Agreement.	North/South talks.	To begin in week nine.