



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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Strand One: Position Papers

1. At the weekend, papers were submitted by the British Government and the four parties, variously entitled "Realities and Common Themes" (British paper), "Common Issues and Propositions" (the two Unionist papers), "Requirements for New Structures" (SDLP) and "Requirements for a Solution" (Alliance). Copies of the five papers are beneath.
2. It is likely that there will be a move during the week to agree some kind of synthesis text that would represent the outcome of the current phase of talks - indeed the present British text can be seen as a first effort in this direction. The objective of such a text would be to create a 'platform' on which any future round of talks could be based. Any such agreed document would clearly have considerable status, and its terms therefore will need to be negotiated with great care by the SDLP.

British Paper

3. We were told at the Liaison Group that this would be a factual and 'value free' paper. However, the paper as produced goes beyond a mere summary of the debate so far and, in certain passages, makes a clear attempt to shape the future discussion. Undoubtedly the most problematic section from the nationalist perspective is paragraph 31, which suggests, in effect, that a better deal for nationalists within the North would correspondingly reduce the need for a role for the Irish Government.
4. Other paragraphs in need of amendment include: 4 (we would want a more balanced qualification of the statement that Northern Ireland is a part of the United Kingdom), 6 (it is not only "in cultural terms" that Northern nationalists

identify with the South), 11 (this has resonance of simply a "good neighbourly" relationship between North and South), 16, 17 (we would want to see the kind of balanced language that is reflected in the Anglo-Irish Agreement included here), 21 (it is by no means clear from the debate so far that "there is general support for the transfer to local representatives of legislative as well as executive responsibilities), 25 (the emphasis is entirely on relationships between the two parts of Ireland rather than a role for Dublin arising intrinsically from the situation in the North), 29 (this could imply a readiness to revise the Anglo-Irish Agreement so as to make it acceptable to Unionists).

SDLP Paper

5. This is a reworked version of the Requirements paper with which we are familiar. On our advice - and in anticipation of the line which has emerged in para. 31 of the British Government text - the SDLP has included a reference to "the right of the Irish Government to involvement in the affairs of Northern Ireland" (See Note to para 9 of SDLP paper).

UUP Paper

6. Both Unionist papers are couched in fairly positive terms and the more strident language of the opening presentations is not in evidence. While this is particularly true of the DUP paper, it applies also to the UUP text (drafted by Reg Empey and not by Molyneaux). In its section on Constitutional Status, the UUP states:

"We accept the right of Irish Nationalists within Northern Ireland and the Irish Republic to aspire to a United Ireland based upon the consent of a majority in Northern Ireland, and recognise that the SDLP both by its Constitution and by its attendance at this

Conference is prepared in turn to accept the position of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom for the meantime".

7. In a fairly discursive section on the 'Nature of the Northern Ireland Community', the UUP paves the way for its subsequent argument (section 7) for a new "wider, all embracing British/Irish Agreement, co-extensive to the entire territory of both nations in the British Islands". On local institutions, the UUP (surprisingly) endorses the creation of a locally elected Assembly with legislative as well as administrative responsibilities; in this new Assembly, "each party will have a role commensurate with its support in the community". (The acceptance of legislative devolution in the UUP text may well reflect a certain complacency on Molyneaux's part about the imminent breakdown of the talks).

DUP Paper

8. This is a particularly well drafted paper (Robinson is presumably the author) which consciously strikes a positive and conciliatory note. A strong message is that, with an encouraging start now having been made, "we trust that the necessary time will be made available, without interruption, to accomplish the task and that the momentum, now being built up, will not be lost". Strand 2 discussions are taken for granted, with a reference to proposals which the DUP will submit "at the appropriate point in Strand 2".
9. While the overall tone of the text is positive it is short on specifics and gives nothing away. The acknowledgment that pre-1972 majority rule will not return is accompanied by a conclusion "that power-sharing as of right government has also failed". The DUP uses the same language as the UUP in proposing that in any new local institution, each

constitutional party "would have a role commensurate with its support".

Alliance Paper

10. The Alliance document is fairly short and general, with an emphasis on 'a community government', including the protection and valuing of minorities. Under the heading 'Totality of Relations', the paper envisages changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Constitution and a new "direct, standing, government to government relationship ... augmented by joint commissions on areas of shared economic interest (e.g. agriculture, energy, tourism etc.)" The paper also suggests the replacement of the Anglo-Irish Conference with a tripartite council and an associated tripartite back-bench parliamentary tier.

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