



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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NOTE

Latest Developments

1. Following telephone calls from Hume and Alston, position as of 7pm appears as follows:

- (a) Unionists have produced another paper (text - Annex 1 - received from SDLP, is attached; Note: British declined to give us text). Brooke regards it as reflecting a notable shift in tone; however, he does not consider it "sufficient in itself as at present constituted", and Unionists are working on a revision overnight.
- (b) Apart from the softer language of the paper, Hume does not believe it changes the position in substance. Hume and Brooke had a sharp exchange on the matter in a meeting this afternoon.

SDLP Statement

2. Following a review of the situation later in the evening, the SDLP decided to issue a press statement (the text of the statement - Annex 2 - was issued just before 9pm). It emphasises that "the SDLP have accepted without reservation the Secretary of State's proposals of May 14th". It goes on to say that, since then, the Unionists have put forward new pre-conditions relating to strand two; however, they have also offered "to deal expeditiously" with outstanding issues and the SDLP would advise the Secretary of State to take advantage of this offer in order to resolve matters. When these have been cleared up, "the SDLP will be ready to begin the substantive talks immediately".

4. In subsequent interviews, Hume stated that the SDLP would not be attending at Stormont until the Secretary of State and the Unionists had sorted out the differences between them.

Meetings with British

5. We should be prepared for intensive discussion at a very early date with the British on the three outstanding issues (venue, selection of Chairman, and rules of procedure under which the Chair will operate).

D. P. T.
Dermot Gallagher

20 May, 1991 (9.00pm)

cc: PST; PSM; Mr. Nally; PSS; Mr. Brosnan; Ms. Anderson

wady 20/5/91

Annex 1

JOINT UNIONIST POSITION PAPER

We are concerned to see some constructive progress in the Talks process. We stand ready to participate in Strand 1 as soon as meetings are convened and we see no justifiable impediment to their commencement. We are however seized of the urgency to resolve, in the margins of the Conference, the outstanding issues which will clear the way for Strand 2 leading on to Strand 3.

There should be no doubt as to our determination to complete the process in each of its Strands as evidenced by our endorsement of your 26th. March 1991 statement.

In particular while we did not accept the principle of the appointment of an independent Chairman, if the clarifications concerning his identity and operations were reasonable and in view of the Prime Minister's assurance about the manner of his appointment, we would be prepared to work under him.

In terms of venue the difficulty has been considerably narrowed in that it only remains for us to agree on a venue within Northern Ireland.

We will deal expeditiously with the outstanding issues on receipt of your proposals or if it is helpful we are prepared to make further suggestions ourselves.

SDLP Statement

recd. 7.50 PM

Annex 2

20 May 1991

AGREED

PRESS STATEMENT

The SDLP have accepted without reservation the Secretary of State's proposals of May 14th. We have also made clear that our clear understanding is that all talks would take place on the basis of the British Government's statement made by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons on March 26. That statement made clear that all discussions would be on all three relationships addressed in three strands of talks and that nothing would be agreed until everything was agreed. It also made clear that all parties would engage directly and actively in the North South talks.

Since the 14 May the unionist parties have put forward new pre-conditions relating to strand 2 as published in their version of the Downing Street meeting, - a version which the Secretary of State says he does not endorse. After lengthy discussions today, the Secretary of State put before us a joint unionist paper which again reiterates the matters that had to be agreed by them. They have offered to deal expeditiously with these outstanding issues on receipt of proposals put by the Secretary of State on these matters.

We have advised the Secretary of State to take advantage of this offer to deal expeditiously with these matters with the unionists so that the talks can begin with the minimum of delay. When he has done so the SDLP will be ready to begin the substantive talks immediately.

We share the public concern at the delays to date but we now hope that the Secretary of State can quickly resolve the outstanding issues which prevent the Unionist parties from accepting his May 14 statement.

Ends