

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE

PROCEEDINGS OF THE BUSINESS COMMITTEE

THURSDAY 6 NOVEMBER 1997 AT 10.00 AM

IN ROOM 50. INTERPOINT

Present: Mr J Gorman - Chairman
Mr R Coulter
Mr D Ervine
Mr G McMichael
Mr M Morrow
Mr S Neeson
Ms C Rainey
Mr P Robinson MP
Mr R Stoker

In attendance: Mr N Carson
Miss A Moore

1. APOLOGIES

An apology was received from Ms Sagar.

2. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM MINUTES OF 30 OCTOBER 1997

Press and Media Relations: the Chairman informed the Committee that advertisements appeared for the first time this week and there are already indications of interest.

Invitation to Lord Dubs: the Chairman will send the invitation after the visit by the Secretary of State.

4. **UUP ATTENDANCE ON 31 OCTOBER 1997**

Mr Neeson commented that the UUP leaving the Forum before the normal close of business on 31 October meant that some members wishing to speak on the debate on the Public Processions Bill were not able to do so. Since the absence of the UUP would clearly leave the Forum inquorate he thought it would have been appropriate for the party to have notified the Business Committee in advance. Mr Coulter agreed to take the matter back to the party and recommend that they try not to arrange meetings at times which would clash with the Forum.

5. **FORUM BUSINESS FOR 7 NOVEMBER 1997**

The Chairman confirmed the Secretary of State will visit the Forum on 7 November and apologised that members had heard through an article in the Belfast Telegraph. Mr Robinson was unhappy that the date had not been confirmed to the Business Committee sooner. The Secretary informed the Committee that the structures applied to advance information about such visits were extremely tight. Neither he nor the Chairman were any happier about not being able to inform the Committee earlier and he had raised the matter with the Secretary of State's office.

The format of the visit was discussed. The Chairman said that the Secretary of State wanted to take all questions and provide one composite answer. Not agreed. The members agreed that each party should be allowed to ask at least one question in the usual order. Time should allow the UUP and DUP to get 3 questions, Alliance 2 and the remaining parties one each.

The format was agreed as:

Chairman's Opening Remarks
Adjournment
Secretary of State to arrive
One minute's silence
Chairman to welcome the Secretary of State
Secretary of State's address
Question and Answer session
Secretary of State to depart

The Agenda was agreed as:

Address by the Secretary of State
Motion calling for The Firearms (Amendment) Act 1997 to be extended
to Northern Ireland
Motion on Coats Viyella

Mr Stoker suggested that it may be appropriate to have a statement on the Public Accounts Committee Report on Positively Belfast. It was agreed, time permitting, to allow a statement at the end of business.

It was agreed to postpone until 21 November the debate on a Motion calling on the Government to Treat all the People of Northern Ireland as Equals.

6. **FORUM AGENDA FOR 14 NOVEMBER 1997**

The Secretary reported that no date has yet been set for the publication of the Police Bill. The members therefore agreed to delay the proposed debate until 21 November.

Agreed: Presentation of a paper by Standing Committee E on Integrated Transport Policy

Debate on a Motion supplied by the UUP on the Anglo-Irish Agreement

7. PROVISIONAL FORUM AGENDA FOR 21 NOVEMBER 1997

Agreed: Debate on the Police Bill

Debate on a UUP Motion calling on the Government to Treat all the People of Northern Ireland as equals

The Chairman informed the Committee that the Moldovan Initiative Committee of Management (MICOM) will be visiting Belfast from 16 to 23 November and would like to use a meeting room and observe the Forum in action. He suggested it might be appropriate to ask them to make a presentation to the Forum. After a brief discussion it was agreed to ask Standing Committee A (Political Affairs) to sponsor an open Committee meeting with MICOM on 21 November over an extended lunch during which members could, if they wished, observe the proceedings.

*A. Hentton
for
Barbara &
Robin.*



Nigel Carson

NIGEL CARSON
Forum Secretary

Robin & Barbara
unformed
MOTION ON Fri 21st
on Quengoo