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From: Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
27 June 1996

SUMMARY RECORD OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES AND  
AGENDA FOR PLENARY SESSION - TUESDAY 25 JUNE 1996 (11.06)

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
General de Chastelain	British Government	Alliance Party
Mr Holkeri	Irish Government	Labour Party
		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 welcomed everyone back at 11.06 and called the meeting to order. He then recapped on his earlier suggestion and asked for acceptance from the participants to follow the procedures as already outlined, ie, the two Governments would speak first on the draft rules paper, then a round table discussion in a clockwise mode would be commenced with the parties and following this a more detailed section by section analysis would be made of the document. There was unanimous acceptance of this format.

2. The Minister of State (Mr Ancram) put forward the Governments' views on the draft rules of procedure document. These are contained in detail in Annex A.

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3. Mr Taylor for the Irish Government then provided comments on the draft rules. A copy of his remarks are enclosed at Annex B.

4. Dr Paisley asked whether the participants could be told whether the Minister of State was in full agreement with Mr Taylor's comments on behalf of the Irish Government. The Minister of State referred Dr Paisley to the remarks in his speech. Dr Paisley said that that wasn't his question in the first instance and again asked whether the Minister was in full agreement with the Irish comments on how they viewed the proposed amendments to the draft rules of procedure. The Minister of State indicated to Dr Paisley that if he (Dr Paisley) looked at the text of the amendments then he would discover that these did flow from the Governments in the context of para 7 of the original Ground Rules. Mr Taylor at this point indicated that these amendments had been jointly tabled by both Governments. Mr Robinson asked whether there were not two issues here: on the one hand the text of the amendments to the draft rules appeared to be reasonable in terms of what both Governments had inputted to it; but on the other hand he was concerned about the meaning beyond the text, namely the interpretation made earlier by Mr Taylor for the Irish Government. Mr Robinson returned to the original question raised by Dr Paisley and asked whether the British Government was happy with the Irish interpretation of what the proposed amendments meant to both the draft rules under discussions and the original Ground Rules.

5. The Minister of State again referred to para 7 of the original Ground Rules and reiterated that the basis on which the amendments from both Governments had been put forward was in the spirit of that paragraph. Dr Paisley asked the Minister of State whether or not he had read the Irish Government's comments and then asked whether the Irish Government agreed with the British Government's comments. Mr Taylor answered in the affirmative.



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Dr Paisley reiterated that that was why he had asked for some clarity. The Minister of State said that that he had already given a straight answer. Dr Paisley indicated that he had not given a clear response.

6. Mr Close said that he hoped his remarks would be short as it was now time to get on with the substantive negotiations. He restated the reasons why Alliance was present at the process; this had been as a result of invitations, elections, Ground Rules, and Acts of Parliament. He continued saying that he was sure there were those around the table who wished that Ground Rules didn't exist and they were therefore trying to use this particular arena to remove the substance of them. He believed this was not helping progress. He did, however, recognise the potential benefits of a single set of rules in one document and indicated that his party would participate in future debate towards this objective. This, however, in Alliance's view did not take away the original standing of the Ground Rules. Viewing the process from an overall perspective Mr Close said it had to move on and deal quickly with these amendments so that other issues could be tackled sooner rather than later. In closing his remarks Mr Close indicated that it would be nice to see a demonstration of goodwill to enable the process to keep moving forward.

7. Mr Curran commented that he had listened carefully to both the Government statements and asked whether everyone could see the actual texts as it would be useful to have them during future discussions. He continued saying that despite the fact that he had arrived at the talks with a "derisory" mandate as some had commented previously, he wanted to pay tribute to both Governments for listening to the Labour points thus far. He also wished to pay tribute to other delegations whom Labour had met during the course of discussions on the present text over the previous few days .



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Mr Curran then asked whether the process was discussing legal niceties or the future of Northern Ireland. His party had entered the room hoping to progress matters on the latter issue but had since been baffled about what was going on. He said that he felt he understood the fears and worries that some had around the table about the process as he had some personal experience of this coming from an area of community tension in England. He believed however that the Governments had done the right thing in tabling proposals to the draft rules and he commended them for this. He looked forward to the discussion of substantive issues when the rules were finally agreed.

8. Ms Hinds stated that she wanted to raise three issues: the basis and management of the conduct of the process; the principles of the rules; and democracy. She said that her party had accepted the basis for the invitation to talks as that contained in the Act of Parliament and the Command Paper 3232. As the process developed from that point her party had also accepted the "compromise" position which arose out of the 6 June documents. Furthermore the NIWC had used the opportunity of "a blank sheet of paper" to help to define the current rules of procedure although she viewed the Command Paper as having an over-arching remit to enable this latter position to be developed. She said that the conduct of the negotiations was a matter for those involved in them but that the rules of procedure were an important aspect of conduct. They should be regarded as a first and major point of reference. She continued saying that she wanted to pay tribute to those who had been positively engaged in the previous week's discussion on the rules and was content that these now seemed to be moving towards an apparent compromise. Given this situation there was therefore a need to move on. Turning to her second point, Ms Hinds indicated that the principles of the rules should be viewed as an enabling mechanism rather than a preventative one for the process.



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Furthermore the rules of procedure should be available to provide full and frank discussion of all issues. The role of the Chairman, in her view, also needed to be positive and not neutered by the rules to enable everyone to move forward in discussions. Ms Hinds commented that agreement had to be comprehensive and substantive and one which must be achieved by all concerned in the room. Turning to the issue of democracy, Ms Hinds stated that it was not democratic to rule items off the agenda, nor was it democratic to use the rules to block the discussion or to bully and bluster. The participants around the table had, in her view, been elected to deal with the issues in a rash manner and she called into question the impact on society generally in Northern Ireland if the process was viewed as operating in an irresponsible manner. In summarising, Ms Hinds stated that the rules of procedure were an important factor in aiding democracy but they were not to confound it. She looked forward to everyone reaching a point where compromise could be found on the draft rules.

9. Mr Ervine began his remarks by posing the question as to how everyone had arrived at the table. The 30 May election was the definitive answer. He then asked why everyone was present. Again the answer appeared to be clear cut in that all concerned were attempting to achieve a settlement for Northern Ireland. He continued saying that his party and others were being thwarted because some others were fearful of the process. He claimed that the shadow boxing so far on the draft rules had created a bad atmosphere and a genuine attempt was now needed to produce a composite document in order to get past the nightmare and into substantial discussions. If this did not occur, he commented, the process was likely to collapse and the ordinary people, whose views had to remain uppermost in all participants' minds, would not take kindly to this happening. Moving on, Mr Ervine commented that, in the PUP's view, bilaterals were a satisfactory mechanism but they



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could also be viewed as a negation of rights. The main advantage of multi-party, round table discussions was that it provided a much better debating, negotiating and inclusive environment. There was not much value in protracted bilaterals which marginalised the participants. Mr Ervine returned to a previously made point saying that if the participants couldn't agree on the draft rules of procedure how were they ever going to agree on the substantive issues. Mr Ervine, in concluding his remarks, stated that the process had to move on as he now believed everyone had a basis for reaching agreement. In front of them was in his party's view, a fairly acceptable draft rules paper which had arisen from "a blank sheet of paper". There was therefore no further excuse for stalling.

10. Mr Mallon commented that he believed the ensuing discussions had developed into the most politically inspired debate he had attended for some time. It was clear to him that the essence of these discussions had been political; it was foolish to assume otherwise and he acknowledged that, to some degree, this position was inevitable. Mr Mallon accepted this position simply because discussions were focusing on the very essence of the political problems facing everyone around the table. He continued by referring back to other participants who had spoken about why they were present. As for the SDLP, Mr Mallon stated that the original Ground Rules had been a central plank in his party's decision to fight the election on 30 May. He continued saying that if they had not had the commitments from both Governments which were enshrined in the Ground Rules, his party would not have been part of the process. The Ground Rules were therefore vitally important to them and to the process as a whole. Mr Mallon stated that he agreed with the Irish Attorney General's comments from an earlier meeting on the legal status of the Ground Rules and he took it that for those reasons both Governments remained committed to them. He



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stated that any change to this commitment would have profound problems for the SDLP. Mr Mallon continued saying that it was not the practical arrangements that were being brought into question in the discussions thus far. His party had compromised in every version produced to date. Now they were being asked to look at gaps of procedure with some of the other parties. As a result of the previous day's discussion, his party thought that the gaps had been identified and could therefore be closed.

11. Mr Mallon continued saying that the previous day was another one compared to today and now the discussions had moved on from semantics to more crucial political points. He indicated that the closing of gaps referred to earlier could have been taken forward in different ways. There were those who had insisted that some of the original Ground Rules be transferred into the new draft document. His party had not liked this idea but went along with the view that this was in accordance with the proposal to close gaps between the two sets of rules. Mr Mallon stated that now the issue appeared to be focusing on transferring 15 of the original Ground Rules into the new draft document which seemed to indicate that there was some flexibility on the status of the original Ground Rules. He indicated that his party would not allow this flexibility to be given over to either attacks on or indeed cherry-picking of those rules. He continued saying that his party had tabled an amendment which was central to the debate. They therefore looked forward to that discussion and agreed with the Governments that it should now proceed. In concluding his remarks, Mr Mallon stated that if the Ground Rules were going to be manipulated then they would have to wait and see how negotiations were conducted. Hopefully, he stated, these would not just be carried forward on the strength of internal procedural guidelines.



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12. Mr McMichael said that he shared the frustration of others in the speed of events to date. He was hopeful that all could now agree with the paper in front of them and participants felt they had ownership of the process through this amended drafting process. He continued saying that the "blank piece of paper" had been an essential element in moving the discussion forward. It was now a case of focusing on agreeing the document and hence the nature of the negotiating process. Mr McMichael indicated to the Chairman that his party was prepared to engage in a section by section discussion so that this would bring everyone quickly to the core of the debate. He hoped that other parties would operate on a similar basis so that agreement could be achieved and the process moved on.

13. Mr Robinson stated that he believed that behind the different positions being adopted by the parties there were some common features binding them together. The instability in the Province and the requirement to search for a peaceful solution were two of these. He continued saying that his party's view of the basis for entry into this process was the invitation issued by the Secretary of State dated 4 June; this in itself had flowed from para 2, sub-para 2 of the 1996 Act. Mr Robinson commented that participants were not present as a result of the 6 June invitation which he claimed should never have been sent. This, he commented, had broken a promise contained in earlier consultations between the Government and the NI parties on issues contained in the Ground Rules. Instead of acknowledging these the Government had consulted with the Irish Government and ignored the NI parties. Mr Robinson indicated that the DUP did not feel bound by the 6 June invitation nor did it feel bound by the Ground Rules. He then referred back to comments that he had presented to the British Government regarding his party's unhappiness with the Ground Rules in April of this year. The DUP had, at that point, articulated their non-acceptance of the Ground Rules and had put forward the proposal



that Ground Rules should be agreed by the participants at the talks process itself. He indicated that at no stage had anyone presented the view that this was a flawed or improper judgement on the DUP's part. In fact, he claimed, how could it be otherwise when one looked at para 7 of the Ground Rules which quoted that the negotiations were exclusively a matter for the participants.

14. Mr Robinson continued saying that he acknowledged that some around the table would attempt to bestow a narrow definition of this paragraph but this was not so in the DUP's view. Mr Robinson continued saying that he believed that patience should be shown around the table as these were not small issues but fundamental matters of principle. The discussion was, in fact, dealing with rules of procedure which themselves led directly on to negotiations which directly affected his own country. He did not therefore concur with Alliance's earlier comments regarding the need to move on and agree the rules quickly. Mr Robinson said that the key points in his mind were essentially that a level playing field was required with regard to the rules of procedure. His party did not want to be put on a designated course by some of the participants. There should be no limitations, no requirements, no conditions or parameters placed on the DUP in these rules and the negotiations flowing from them. One had to remember that the original Ground Rules had been put forward by joint owners of the process and it was not therefore a case of conditions and rules being handed down by the two larger players in deference to the other participants. The whole issue and matters regarding the agreeing of the rules needed to be taken forward from a viewpoint of collective ownership because it was against this principle that the rules would be judged when completed.

15. Mr Robinson then recapped on events during the past week. He included references to statements made about "a blank piece of



paper", the possibility of a new beginning, the fact that the DUP proposals took into account proposals from the original Ground Rules, thereby reinforcing the point of "a blank sheet of paper" and so on. He went on to add that it became immediately obvious during the period that some parties had a limited vision of the Ground Rules as they did not in their view deal with matters of great substance. He continued saying that the moment then arrived the previous Wednesday where the meeting was informed by the Minister of State (Mr Ancram) that the new rules being drafted merely supplemented and developed the original Ground Rules as laid down by the Governments. It was clear therefore on that basis that no blank piece of paper existed. He had now listened again today and the Government still seemed to be confirming this position. Once again, therefore, he asked the question as to the clarity of the Ground Rules in terms of their status. He acknowledged that there had been a number of different perspectives from the parties on this but his party needed to know whether the two Governments were saying that nothing outside the current composite draft document would be on the table.

16. Mr Robinson continued saying that he thought this was what the Minister of State had been saying a little earlier in the discussion, ie, that he was looking towards a single, comprehensive document which was complete and self-contained in terms of providing a single source of procedural reference. Then when he listened to the Irish Government and Mr Taylor's address there seemed to have been a different slant introduced. On the face of it the Irish comments were saying that only elements of the original Ground Rules imported into the new rules were covered by their interpretation of para 7. All other matters were being held behind and kept separate and hence the status of the original Ground Rules still stood. If this was the case, said Mr Robinson, then the discussion needed to look at the distinction which was



being made. HMG was saying one thing, the Irish were saying that some transposition could occur but that the original Ground Rules, particularly those sections relating to the conduct and character of the negotiations, still applied. It therefore seemed appropriate for Mr Robinson to ask the question as to which Ground Rules still had application after these draft rules were agreed. He firmly believed that as a next stage, the process should move to a single document with the non-contentious elements of the original Ground Rules being taken out and put in the new draft rules leaving a discussion on the contentious issues to be resolved.

17. Mr Wilson commenced his remarks by referring to the joint UKUP/DUP proposals attached at page 4 of the "proposed additions" paper (document 2) and stated that his party would be pleased to elaborate on these proposals. He continued saying that from the UKUP perspective there needed to be an honest approach from everyone around the table to resolving these issues. Some parties had suggested that the unionists were reluctant to get into substantive discussions but in fact nothing could be further from the truth. The key issue at stake here was the importance of working from a solid foundation. Contrary to the "cavalier" approach of some parties, the UKUP believed that the cornerstone of the process was the key issues surrounding the rules of procedure, the powers and role of the Chairman. If some parties wanted to adopt the attitude of "this will do", in respect of the rules of procedure he could not personally endorse this approach. However, what he had been asked to accept, using the analogy of a football game, was an imposed referee, a set of imposed rules to his team's detriment and a fixed outcome to the result of the game. His party wanted to put forward views to the process in general without being straitjacketed and he did not subscribe to the position that unionist views could in some way be filtered through the Chairman and then watered down in terms of the substance of their



negotiating position. The unionists must not be disadvantaged in any way.

18. Mr Wilson continued saying that he had heard nothing in Mr Mallon's comments that appeared to suggest that flexibility was on offer even though the SDLP deputy leader had alluded to this earlier. Mr Mallon's position was absolutely clear to him, either the Ground Rules stood or the SDLP would not continue with the process. He then wondered why people had the audacity to chide the unionists about their resolute position on certain key issues. Mr Wilson continued saying that the UKUP position was similar to the DUP on this issue. There was far too much at stake in these negotiations for the unionist community as a whole and it was quite wrong and impossible to try and fudge the issue. If the original Ground Rules continued to have some existence then he believed they would simply be used in substantive negotiations as a means to an end for some parties. Mr Wilson therefore regarded them as a ghost which could come back and haunt the unionist parties on certain issues. He stated that it was an absolute necessity to look at the guidelines in a paragraph by paragraph format simply because the UKUP did not want a straitjacket put in place by the two Governments. In concluding his remarks Mr Wilson reminded the meeting that any suggestion to accept the original Ground Rules, the wider Anglo-Irish Agreement process or indeed to negotiate the union would never be acceptable to his party.

19. Mr Trimble began his remarks by referring to Mr Mallon's earlier point that the discussions were now not simply dealing with procedural points but politically important issues. To a degree, he said, Mr Mallon was correct in his assumption and he therefore thought it unsurprising that the discussion on procedural rules had taken this long. He continued saying that he did not regard 3/4 weeks as extensive in agreeing the rules of procedure for the



negotiations. One only had to look back at 1991 to see that it took at least 5 weeks to complete this element of the business. He stated, however, that there was an urgent need to work towards a single document and believed this was the objective now before the meeting in any event. Irrespective of what other parties comments had been, he believed that the exercise had started with "a blank sheet of paper" and drew the meeting's attention to the fact that this description had first been used by an Irish Minister on 12 June. He believed this was an important point worthy of note. He continued saying that there had been plenty of discussion on the status of the original Ground Rules and many positions/views had been articulated on this issue around the table. One view that might be offered was that the references to Ground Rules in the 1996 Act simply identified the "negotiations". Another view held by the Irish Government was that the references in the Act gave statutory effect to every aspect in the Ground Rules. This, he believed, was clearly untenable. Yet, he said, the Irish Government had more recently agreed to change the original Ground Rules and this appeared to be somewhat contradictory to their earlier statements.

20. Mr Trimble said that there was also an intermediate position between the two which seemed to be suggesting that the references in the Act also referred to the character and nature of the negotiations. Mr Trimble continued saying that the Minister of State had been varying between these three positions, depending at what point you spoke to him. For example, during the Westminster debate the Minister of State had adopted one position, namely the first. Now he seemed to be adopting a different position during this discussion. He wondered whether it was going to be helpful to ask the Minister of State if he could define his position but then thought there was little point in worrying about this. What was required was a single set of rules irrespective of the three



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positions, thus providing a new document which built on the original Ground Rules. Finally, on this issue, Mr Trimble stated that he did not find the SDLP amendment in the "proposed additions" paper to be helpful.

21. Turning to other comments, Mr Trimble indicated that there was still an incoherence and inconsistency with the definition of the Strand 3 provisions in the present draft rules. He referred specifically to the proposed addition to procedural rule 2 which referred to Strand 2 issues being between the two Governments, and made reference to the "totality of relationships" in para 1 of the original Ground Rules and the reference "between the people of these islands" which appeared in the same paragraph of the Ground Rules. Mr Trimble wondered whether there was an internal contradiction vis a vis the position of the two Governments on this issue and was there now a certain amount of "papering over the cracks" emerging. Mr Trimble also said that the UUP was concerned with the rules as appeared in para 33. He acknowledged that some development had occurred here with the drafting in the previous few days but he did not believe this was sufficient. He was also slightly puzzled by the proposed addition of 11A and wondered whether it should not be 12A. He also believed that if this was correct then 12A seemed to overlap with the beginning of rule 13. He believed there was also a point of substance still present in rule 13, referring to the indicative calendar etc., and thought it might be possible to merge 11A with 13 and drop the first sentence of the latter rule.

22. Mr Trimble also indicated that he had concerns with 15/15A although again he acknowledged that the language had moved some way from the original text. He also noted the change in rule 17A, viewing with it, the similarity with his own party's proposals even though the wording was slightly different. He asked why the second



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sentence of the UUP proposals had been accepted and not the first; yet the latter was in the original Ground Rules and had therefore, by definition, been accepted by the Minister of State. Mr Trimble also indicated that in the UUP's amendments submitted on 19 June, they had indicated that the original Ground Rule 17 should be brought in case it was lost sight of. Mr Trimble continued saying that in terms of going forward he agreed that a paragraph by paragraph discussion was required. He reminded participants of what was discussed the previous week in terms of getting through that which could be agreed and parking those issues which gave rise to disagreement. Mr Trimble recalled that there was still a requirement to get on with defining the Agenda for the remainder of the Opening Plenary session and there were extremely important issues in this context which were bound up with procedural matters. He believed an urgent means might therefore be required of working through these documents to ascertain the level of agreement so that one could get an overall look at the package. Mr Mallon intervened at this point saying that the UUP leader had seemed to be referring to him when making this remark yet he had made no reference to a package at any stage and wholly objected to this word being used.

23. Dr Paisley returned to an earlier question asking whether all participants would be receiving a copy of both Government speeches. The Chairman indicated at this point that it was up to the speakers themselves. The Minister of State agreed that he would circulate his text provided it was handled on a confidential basis. He did not want matters of substance which were discussed in the conference room immediately appearing outside the confines of the process. Mr Taylor for the Irish Government indicated that he had no problem in circulating the text of his address. Ms Hinds raised a question as to whether confidentiality had been agreed by all the participants. Dr Paisley indicated that he had no problem with this point. He also did not need any lectures about being careful



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about leaks to the press, particularly when in the last talks process of 1991 it seemed to be more a question of who didn't break the rules when information and various steers from the two Governments appeared in the media at regular intervals.

Mr Robinson also commented that parties had been lectured regarding confidentiality in the last talks process on a regular basis by HMG. Dr Paisley intervened, recalling that confidential minutes produced by HMG had been handed over to Sinn Fein. He therefore wondered whether and to what extent Sinn Fein had been briefed by both Governments during the current process.

24. The Chairman intervened at this point saying that discussions within the room were confidential. Mr Wilson made the point that no corporate ruling on confidentiality had yet been adopted for the body. The Chairman asked the question as to whether one could accept such a ruling now. Dr Paisley returned to his earlier question and asked if contacts had been maintained with Sinn Fein during the current talks process. The Minister of State said that he was content that the original issue of both speeches being circulated could be organised as a helpful mechanism and he was confident that confidentiality would be observed. He continued saying that HMG had had no contacts nor passed over any papers to Sinn Fein during the current process. Mr Taylor for the Irish Government also indicated a similar position. Mr Robinson commented that if the issue of confidentiality was now resolved a decision was still required one way or the other about producing a single composite document on the rules. The Minister of State reiterated his earlier comments on this point. Mr Robinson believed that elements of word playing were continuing. One side, ie the British Government were sticking to the point of trying to achieve "a single set of rules", but the Irish were making a distinction between procedural matters and wider elements which cast doubt over the original Ground Rules. Mr Robinson then asked



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whether there was another document which had substance in this process in addition to the procedural rules. The Minister of State again quoted the context of the Ground Rules and suggested it would be useful to read what he had been saying in his address when it was circulated. Mr Robinson returned to his point asking whether the Minister of State was saying that there was some continuing life to the original Ground Rules and the Irish were suggesting something similar but that original Ground Rules were not amendable in certain aspects.

25. Dr Paisley stated that it was useful to raise this issue for clarity and then asked what the standing of the document now under discussion was. Was it simply a procedural set of rules or did it have wider connotations? The Minister of State said that he already made the status of the Ground Rules clear. He went on to say that he thought Mr Trimble's suggestion was good and that the meeting should proceed on this basis. Mr Robinson asked whether the Minister of State was saying that the imported Ground Rules were amendable. If this was the case did the remainder which weren't transported then remain in force and become unamendable? The Minister of State said that one had to look at how the negotiations were conducted and it seemed sensible to try and aim for a single set of rules to ensure that the negotiations were conducted in accordance with them.

26. Dr Paisley indicated that he still had one point which worried the DUP about the original Ground Rules. It was the point that Mr Mallon had made earlier about the status of them which encouraged his party to fight the election. Dr Paisley said that he understood the importance of the context of that statement. He went on to add however that certain parties were now being asked to line up with some of the Ground Rules to which their political opposites had been encouraged to come into the electoral process.



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He wondered whether at the back of all of this lay nothing more than a ruse to bring Sinn Fein into the process and he had a great concern over this. At this point the Chairman indicated that when the final speakers had addressed the meeting, it would adjourn for lunch.

27. Mr Mallon commenced his remarks by referring back to Dr Paisley's earlier comments about his party's (SDLP) encouragement to come into the process. Mr Mallon continued on this point saying that amongst those that encouraged his party to enter negotiations were both Governments and both Prime Ministers. Mr Mallon said that this encouragement shouldn't be viewed as political subservience in any way. It was also a fact that the SDLP had no hidden agenda in terms of this encouragement. Everyone knew the status of original Ground Rules and indeed the contents of the Command Paper. But what appeared to be happening in this process was a certain amount of arm twisting in the unionist camp with some trying to outflank others using the vehicle of the Ground Rules and the Command Paper to achieve this.

28. Mr Mallon reaffirmed his party's view that it would not allow inter party rivalry to distort the position of others in the process - including the Governments. Yet this was one of the factors underlying the tactics to date. He said it was also sad, given Dr Paisley's maturity, that these points were being used to sharpen the edge of the unionist rivalry. He asked what fear Unionists had in facing up to the major issues now or was it simply going to be a case of hiding behind the procedural guidelines for a few more weeks. He reiterated the point that the SDLP were up front with their agenda, there was nothing hidden in their stated position and it was on all fours with the procedural rules and other documents which related to the process.



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29. Mr Wilson commented that an answer was still needed on HMG's position on the original Ground Rules. He continued by saying that Mr Mallon continued to attack the Unionist position and therefore they, the Unionists, had to defend themselves against this. He commented that he believed that there were fears on the SDLP side too. They were fearful of the Unionist position and fearful that they would be bound and gagged by the changes to the Ground Rules. They were also fearful of the Chairman's position as outlined in the new rules. Mr Wilson continued saying that the reason why the Unionists were fearful of the SDLP position was that they viewed the only solution to the process as a united Ireland or nothing and that's why Unionists had always to be on the defensive.

30. Dr Paisley said that there were no fears within the parties but that he was more worried about the fears of the unionist people outside. It was interesting to hear that the Ground Rules had brought the SDLP into discussions and that therefore the Ground Rules were a bait to make this happen. If one developed this point further it could be plainly seen that the rules as so described were not only a vehicle to have the SDLP at the talks but also Sinn Fein. He stated that this was why the leaders were present on the Unionist side to ensure that the wheeling and dealing of sops to the SDLP were stopped and that any further entrees to Sinn Fein coming into the talks could also be halted. He continued saying that he firmly believed that the original Ground Rules were "republican orientated" rules. They were also a straitjacket for Unionists as had already been indicated in earlier comments and he believed that the Governments had already decided on the outcome of the talks. The Unionists however were present to stop a united Ireland rising out of this process. It was therefore his view that this issue was much larger than just simply talking about procedural guidelines. He added that the original Ground Rules pointed the way to suit the SDLP's and Sinn Fein's aims and



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objectives as well as the Irish Government and to all intents and purposes they also bore the aims of the British Government which sadly had lost its way in terms of the Unionists' support.

Dr Paisley added that he took from what Mr Trimble had said earlier that he (Mr Trimble) was concerned that the present discussion was moving towards a single set of rules. He claimed the resolution of this was vital and a crunch point. Dr Paisley indicated that if this current document was not the "last" one to be dealt with then the DUP needed to know this before entering into a line by line discussion. This was the DUP position and his party waited to read the earlier speeches from both Governments delivered that morning.

31. The Chairman indicated that there were two further speakers and following both of these the session would adjourn for lunch. Ms Hinds commented that she realised people did need to get issues of substance off their chest but perhaps this could be done without making lofty speeches. She reaffirmed her party's view that they did understand the process and didn't regard issues such as those being debated as small or minor. Ms Hinds also commented that although earlier in the day she had suggested that her party didn't want bilaterals occurring on a regular basis it might be useful to take a more flexible approach, given Mr Trimble's earlier suggestion, for one set of participants to have a bilateral with the Unionists now. Mr Donaldson stated that the main issue for the UUP was whether the participants were bound to the original Ground Rules. There were elements of ambiguity in this. For example was the UUP being asked to endorse rules which they had no part in drawing up? This issue needed to be reflected on over lunch and an answer given on this point. There was also an outstanding answer required on the point raised earlier in the discussion by the DUP as whether the document now under debate would be the only point of reference for the forthcoming negotiations. The Minister of State then proposed an amendment to



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para 17A (text in later papers). Mr Trimble indicated to the Chairman that it might be better if that paragraph took all of the UUP comments rather than what appeared to be just half of them. At this point the Chairman indicated that he would adjourn the meeting for lunch and asked participants to reconvene at 14.00. The meeting then adjourned at 12.59.

[Signed]

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