

DRAFT SUMMARY RECORD OF OPENING PLENARY SESSION -  
MONDAY 14 OCTOBER 1996 (22.41)

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
Mr Holkeri	British Government	Alliance Party
General de Chastelain	Irish Government	Labour
		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 convened the session at 22.41 and stated that although prior to the adjournment he had had a list of speakers, he now wished to give the floor to the UKUP to allow it to continue.

2. The UKUP said it had some amendments to the UUP/SDLP proposal. It said the format of the discussions thus far had been similar to that of a second reading at Westminster for it now seemed that the actual terms of decommissioning were being debated in detail. The UKUP said its position on decommissioning was quite clear. The joint communiqué had established the position in that all participants to the process were required to provide two items. One was a commitment to the Mitchell Principles: the second was addressing the issue of decommissioning. The UKUP said that despite frequent questioning of the British Government it had been impossible to get any clear view of what addressing decommissioning actually meant. This position still remained to



the present. What was clear was that the two Governments realised there were two pre-requisites before parties reached the agenda phase - a commitment to the Mitchell Principles and the addressing of decommissioning. The UKUP said it believed the term "addressing" was being kept deliberately vague, yet decommissioning was a priority for the pro-union parties. This brought the UKUP to its first amendment which it wished to propose to the UUP/SDLP proposal.

3. The UKUP said that the proposed agenda relegated a very important matter (decommissioning) to second place and this was contrary to earlier language which the party had outlined previously. The UKUP, as its first amendment, wished to propose that item 2 be transposed to item 1. The party said there was absolutely no doubt that this issue had to be addressed before anything else. The matter didn't depend on anything else. It was not an agenda item. Decommissioning was secondary only to the Mitchell Principles and for that reason it must be first on the agenda. The UKUP said that its second amendment was designed to substitute certainty for doubt. In other words the party wished to put beyond any doubt the fact that all proposals, including those of the International Body's, should be considered before achieving agreement on the principles for decommissioning. Looking at the UUP/SDLP document and item 2(a), the UKUP said it was told, like others, that this was intended to afford anyone the opportunity to talk about anything. There was therefore, on this basis, no need to specifically mention the International Body at this point, as inclusion only seemed to cause confusion. If both the UUP and SDLP really did intend to execute what they had said earlier on this, then neither could object to the alternative formulation "consideration of all proposals". This was the second UKUP amendment.



4. Moving on, the UKUP referred to its own proposals which provided for discussion and agreement of proposals. The party asked whether the process ought not to be about the business of achieving agreement. Was it not the case that if the process was going to allow other parties in, then everyone had to be aware of the conditions which would be agreed for this to happen. The UKUP said it was primarily concerned with those parties which fronted for paramilitary groups - hence the need to obtain a measurement of agreement to the proposals. The problem with item 2(b) of the UUP/SDLP paper was that unless there was agreement in advance of it on the principles of decommissioning, it meant absolutely nothing. The UKUP said there had to be a yardstick or benchmark available on which a determination could be made to which Sinn Fein/IRA must commit themselves to work constructively. Item 2(c) needed to be reworded as follows "to implement the agreed decommissioning principles" after the first "to". This was the logical way forward; otherwise it looked like a fudge to allow Sinn Fein/IRA into the process without agreement on principles.

5. The UKUP stated that the opportunity should be taken to establish these principles. It was the democratic way of proceeding rather than the terrorists' method of using the bomb and bullet to achieve their political objectives. The party said that if the participants could establish the principles of decommissioning and the necessary mechanisms and give life to these, then the process could move on to the comprehensive agenda. The UKUP said this was a logical second item on the agenda. The party had no objection to the wording of this (as item 4 in UUP/SDLP paper) except to include the words "as agreed" before comprehensive agenda. However "agreement" could be interpreted in different ways - agreement obtained by majority consensus or by



hammering something through on a simple majority basis. The UKUP questioned the impact of the latter process when 47% of the pro-union people (but non-UUP voters) could view this as something which they did not wish to support. The party also believed that a large proportion of those who had voted for the UUP would not be pleased by circumstances such as the UUP accepting something which the 47% of the other pro-union electorate wouldn't countenance.

6. The UKUP said it did agree with the rules for decision-making but it wished to also highlight the "political" aspects of this at this point. The party said the decision-making process couldn't get away with ignoring a substantial block of the pro-union people. Rule 17 quoted the word "agreement" in the third line but such agreement had to be reached by attempting to achieve unanimity. Agreement was not something which was pushed through by a narrow majority. This only built up a resistance factor if such a circumstance occurred. If the UUP negotiated on the basis of representing 99% of the unionist electorate this was not realistic and could prove fatal for it at the next election.

7. Alliance asked whether the level of support articulated on the unionist side in such decision making needed to be reflected on the nationalist side for this would then include Sinn Fein in the equation, or was this simply a unionist point? The UKUP said this was a fallacious question and Sinn Fein could only enter the process under particular conditions. The UKUP then moved on to item 3 of the UUP/SDLP proposal and proposed that the word "agreed" be inserted prior to "comprehensive agenda". As for item 4, the UKUP proposed that the words "and establishment of agreed mechanisms on decommissioning" should be deleted as this was already dealt with by the party's form of words in its item 1. The UKUP said it did not propose to amend the final item.



was going to be made. The DUP said that

8. The SDLP referred to item one on its joint proposal with the UUP and also recalled the DUP's four issues raised earlier. The party said that if the DUP was concerned or apprehensive about the length of time taken to introduce proposals on the comprehensive agenda then fixed time limits could be introduced by the chair. The Chairman intervened to say that this point would be considered with all participants when the point was dealt with in plenary. The DUP said it raised four questions earlier because of its suspicions and lack of trust on the handling of the agenda issue by the two Governments and the UUP/SDLP. The party wanted to ensure that all proposals, no matter who raised them, were intended to avoid the situation whereby amendments might stymie the process. But why did the UUP and SDLP have objections to putting this point in? The DUP said it found the SDLP's point about time limits helpful, but if the UKUP's amendments didn't find favour, perhaps a proposal from the DUP on time limits could be attempted at that point. The party then stated that over the last number of days it seemed that

9. The DUP then reflected on the background leading up to the production of the joint UUP/SDLP agenda proposal. The UUP, UKUP and DUP had produced an agreed document in early June on an agenda proposal. In late July the document was further refined and at the end of that month a discussion was held with the British Government regarding the "mechanisms" and what this term actually meant. The British Government view at that point went way beyond the DUP view of a mechanism. The DUP viewed it as how the issue would be discussed and then taken forward. The party said that while it was difficult to envisage any other proposals for decommissioning which were not already contained in the Report of the International Body, participants should be honest and open about this and allow any other proposals to be discussed as this



was where the agreements were going to be made. The DUP said that if discussion included "agreement" then this was fine, but at present it didn't. "Agreement", however, came in at item 2(c). But if no agreements were reached in the Opening Plenary and the process flowed through a sub-committee and so on, then the principles of the International Body would be negated as seemed to be the intention. The DUP said this indicated that the decision-making process had moved away from the Opening Plenary to a sub-committee which was the Irish Government's fourth strand. The party didn't want decommissioning fobbed off like this.

10. The DUP said it had no difficulty with the UKUP's amendment regarding inserting the word "agreed" before comprehensive agenda in item 3. Hopefully the SDLP would be warm to this amendment. The party said that the basis of any agreement had to be that matters of personal interest to parties were contained on the agenda. That was why it had to be an agreed agenda. The DUP said it couldn't see how the SDLP could disagree with this view. The party then stated that over the last number of days it seemed that the British Government would have to more closely define the criteria to be applied for entry into the negotiations. Recalling earlier language, the DUP said that the British Prime Minister hadn't just referred to paras 8 and 9 of the ground-rules when setting out the original criteria. He had added that any cease-fire had to be a dependable one. The party was pleased to hear the Irish Prime Minister recently speaking of a "credible and irrevocable cease-fire". It was clear, however, that the attitude of the two Governments to the 1994 cease-fire was not sufficient. That meant there needed to be a new item on the agenda which was entitled "consideration of the terms and conditions of Sinn Finn entering into the negotiations".



11. The DUP said this issue had to be dealt with before the Opening Plenary session was concluded. It was not particularly bothered about where the item appeared on the agenda so long as it came after decommissioning. The DUP continued, referring to the fact that a copy of the agenda proposal was now in the hands of the media outside the gates. The party said that a UUP spokesman had commented outside that the people of Northern Ireland would be very alarmed when they heard what the DUP had agreed to. However the UUP could do what it liked with the document, because a similar incident such as this had happened before, but when the full document appeared it had been evident that the UUP was twisting the story to suit itself. The DUP said it had fought the May election on the basis of the total disarmament of all weapons. When the party referred to decommissioning, it meant total disarmament. The two Governments had, in earlier language, made it clear that decommissioning came immediately after the signing up to the Mitchell Principles. The party asked why had this not happened? The answer appeared to be that it was regarded by the Governments as being politically expedient not to do this, since there were all sorts of plans afoot to get Sinn Fein into the talks process. Sinn Fein, however, had already made it clear they weren't prepared to decommission. Then the two Governments produced their document of 30 September and told everyone what they now meant by addressing decommissioning in six paragraphs of theory, culminating in a sub-committee reporting in December. The DUP said this was just placing decommissioning on the back burner.

*Sinn Fein/IRA view that they had to get into the talks and judge*

12. The party stated that these were the reasons why there was controversy now. The SDLP and the Irish Government had been doing all they could to get Sinn Fein/IRA into the talks process. Now it appeared in the press that decommissioning was not a burning issue; rather it was Sinn Fein's entry into the talks and what



the rules for this would be. The DUP then referred to the agenda proposal produced by the UUP and SDLP. The party said there was supposed to be an agreement between the two parties on the agenda proposal. It had listened however to the UUP comments on the item regarding circulating and introducing proposals for the ~~made not to~~ comprehensive agenda. As far as the UUP was concerned, it was likely to say little by way of introduction, but the SDLP had proposed that the Chairman consider time limits. The real reason for having this circulation and introduction of proposals was that the SDLP couldn't face up to the issue of decommissioning so it was being put on the long finger again by this agenda. As far as the UKUP amendments were concerned, these placed decommissioning at the top of the agenda. The DUP version of the proposed agenda also contained this and was still on the table. The DUP said it felt that, with regard to the "discussion of proposals" issue, there must be agreement on these but no such word appeared on the draft agenda at present. It was, however, happy to go along with the UKUP's earlier amendment and form of words on this. The party stated that the two Governments didn't want agreement on this. They simply wanted to talk on and on ~~the debate~~. This was

13. The DUP believed the real sting was in the proposed 2(c) ~~yons~~ which, in effect, allowed for the three stranded negotiations to commence without any decommissioning occurring. This was totally against the party manifesto on which its electoral support was based. The wording of this item was just going along with the Sinn Fein/IRA view that they had to get into the talks and judge for themselves what was going on and whether progress, in their terms, was being made. The party's stand on this issue would continue. Those that represented paramilitary organisations had to face up to the facts. The loyalist parties had signed up to total disarmament. It was an issue which had to be faced up to



because people outside were demanding it. It was therefore, in the DUP's view, an issue which would make or break the talks process. The party said there was already a message in the media that the process wasn't facing up to the decommissioning issue and it was all the more saddening that an attempt had been made not to have this debate. There were those who simply wanted to vote on this proposal, for the agenda was just a blueprint for the two Governments to continue along a particular route. The DUP stated that the UUP had reminded everyone earlier that it had not consulted directly with the Irish Government on the agenda proposal, but its connections and deliberations with the SDLP had almost certainly brought that dimension into the equation. It was therefore a good thing that an election was coming soon for it would demonstrate who was right or wrong on this issue when the votes were counted.

Referring to other remarks, the DUP said it was not a paramilitary 14. The SDLP proposed that the process now take a vote on the amendments and the draft agenda. The Chairman said he had only two speakers on his list and asked for agreement from the participants that these would conclude the debate. This was agreed. The DUP, in referring to the earlier SDLP proposal, proposed that an adjournment be taken now, thus allowing everyone to return in the morning to consider the issues afresh. The UUP said that the draft agenda, supported by the two Governments, should be considered now. The DUP asked what document was on the table for decision. The Chairman said it was the UUP/SDLP paper tabled that evening.

15. The UUP stated that it considered that its two key issues, actual decommissioning and the entry of Sinn Fein into the negotiations, could be included under the terms of the present proposed agenda. The UUP said that it had listened to the DUP



talking about leaks to the media regarding sections of the agenda document. But the media had had the entire document when the UUP had been outside a few hours previously! At that point the UKUP had actually given an interview focusing on the treachery which was going on inside the talks. The UUP said that on this basis, the rules of confidentiality had been broken and the DUP knew who had done this. The DUP, in reply, stated that it had been present inside the conference room all evening, therefore the UUP sitting accusation was inaccurate.

16. The PUP referred to earlier comments made by the DUP when it referred to media comment focusing on the terms and conditions for Sinn Fein's entry into the talks, thereby pushing decommissioning back. The PUP said it was a very lame excuse for the DUP to be dependant on editorial media comment to try to put a point across. Referring to other remarks, the PUP said it was not a paramilitary party and it should have received protection from the chair on these comments. The PUP said it was not interested in shirking decommissioning. It had discussed the issue on three separate occasions with civil servants, the British Government and the Mitchell Commission. As to the agenda, the DUP had said it was a blueprint for the two Governments. But was the DUP then saying that the PUP couldn't think for itself, so the Government had to push it and others along a pre-determined route?

17. The DUP replied saying that it had simply been referring through media editorial comment, to something which had been depicted as a matter of great concern to all the people of Northern Ireland. This had been presented by an editor, independent of the process, and not one who agreed with the traditional DUP view.



18. The UKUP recalled the last time that the talks had met this late in the evening. It had been on the occasion of the imposition of Senator Mitchell as Chairman against the wishes of a lot of people. The UKUP also reminded everyone about the British Prime Minister's comments on 10 June when the talks commenced, to the effect that nothing would be imposed and the process belonged to all the participants. The UKUP said these words now rung hollow. Also it didn't give the party any pleasure to be sitting beside the UUP who were working with others on an agenda which did not have the most important issue first. In previous discussions with the UUP, it (the UUP) had said that decommissioning was the very next issue on the agenda and the UUP said it would take a stand on this. It was going to be of great concern to the unionist people that after such incidents as Lisburn, the resolve of the UUP was not sufficient to place decommissioning at the top of the agenda. The UKUP said it was saddened by the UUP silence in relation to the four issues raised by the DUP. An agreed agenda had been hammered out between the UUP, UKUP and DUP at the beginning of October. Now the UUP had reneged on this. The reason why the UKUP were present, and wished to table amendments, was not because of some game or filibuster tactic. It was because the issues ran right to the heart of the unionist birthright. The UKUP said it was of no surprise that people hadn't got faith in the talks process when the Independent Chairmen's office appeared to be furthering the cause of republicanism by its actions in handling and distributing the agenda earlier in the evening.

19. The SDLP said that these remarks should not go unchallenged. They were appalling lies which must be withdrawn. This was followed by further allegations by the DUP about collusion by the staff of the Chairman's office and the SDLP to which the SDLP replied that they were just nonsense. The UKUP said that as far



as it was concerned it was not just a matter of petty political point-scoring because real issues were involved. It would not allow the talks process to take Northern Ireland into a 32 county Irish Republic. It said that the stakes were high because the removal of weapons saved lives and it wondered whether in the interests of clarity, the UUP might expand on the point it made earlier in the discussion about how the proposed new agenda item dealing with the terms of entry of Sinn Fein into the talks actually came within the ambit of the proposed agenda item number 2.

20. The UKUP also said that the UUP had said little or nothing about its joint proposal on the agenda. It said that both it and the DUP had raised questions to be answered but the UUP obviously hoped that the SDLP guillotine would save them from explaining to fellow unionists what had happened in the matter. The UKUP also wished to comment on the earlier remarks by the PUP in relation to the material in the Belfast Telegraph. The UKUP had no doubt that the leader writer had implied that loyalist paramilitaries could create trouble if there was no acceleration in the process of the negotiations. The PUP have said as much in television interviews. Neither the UKUP, DUP or UUP would be in any way intimidated by the suggestion that if they fail to do what the PUP says, terrible things will happen.

21. With regard to the proposed DUP amendment about the criteria for the entry of Sinn Fein into the talks process, the UUP had dismissed it as being already covered in paragraph 2 of the joint proposal dealing with decommissioning. The UKUP maintained that it was not. It invited delegations to look at paragraph 5 of the UUP policy document of 30 September, 1995 dealing with this matter. None of the items in question conceivably came within the



scope of paragraph 2 of the joint paper. It would now seem that the UUP were doing a deal with the British Government to impose a series of checks on Sinn Fein. The SDLP should consider this matter carefully. On Monday last, the UUP actually got around to saying that a permanent cease-fire had first to be declared by the IRA.

22. At this point the SDLP wondered whether the meeting was discussing a point of substance which was not before the meeting. The UKUP argued that the point was relevant because paragraph 2 of the joint proposal did not cover the point at issue and it supported its argument by reference to the UUP document. For the UUP to maintain its position in the matter was nothing short of ludicrous and the UKUP wanted a response. The UUP said that following Lisburn, the UUP saw the absolute need to address decommissioning at this stage. That was why the party wanted to get past the agenda item to get into the issues associated with decommissioning. The DUP interjected to ask why then did the leader of the UUP earlier in the day indicate that the party had switched its attention to the issue of the cease-fire? The UUP said it had not heard those remarks, but the whole point for the UUP was that the issue of permanent and immediate importance was the setting of the conditions of entry for Sinn Fein into the talks process. The UUP paper produced a fortnight ago and referred to by the UKUP still represented the position of the UUP in the matter. It intended to table under agenda item 2(a) the points set out in that paper regarding Sinn Fein entry. The matter had implications for decommissioning and that was why it would be so included.

23. The UUP stressed that it would not support any proposal to move decommissioning into a fourth strand of the talks. The party



had outlined the mechanisms in its paper which they wanted to see adopted. There would be a need to obtain sufficient consensus for the proposals, but it was adamant that there would be no fourth strand on decommissioning. The party wanted the proposed agenda agreed so that the meeting could get into decommissioning. The discussion on the agenda was holding up the process. The DUP said it accepted quite a bit of what was said in good faith but if decommissioning was the first item on the agenda, how could that delay dealing with it. The UUP said it wanted to apply a time limit in relation to item 1 on the comprehensive agenda issues. Its idea was that proposals in the matter would be circulated by the parties and the meeting would move straight away into the subject of decommissioning. Other parties appeared to want 20 minute introductions, but even so, the matter could move quite speedily into decommissioning. It won't be a stalling tactic. The Chairman concluded the debate at that point and said that the meeting would proceed to deal with the various proposals which had to be addressed. He said that the first point to be decided was what was the draft agenda document for the remainder of the opening plenary. Was it the joint document proposed by the UUP and the SDLP or was it that document as signed also by the 5 other parties which was the last document to be tabled? The DUP asked when was the first document withdrawn. The Chairman asked whether the meeting accepted his ruling that the document was tabled. The DUP said one document was tabled, the joint document, and it had not been withdrawn. It said that the UUP had referred to an amended document but did not move it. Is under item 1 of the agenda be limited to 20 minutes (in the event that the first of the UKUP 24. The DUP contended that the reason for this was that the UUP wanted to be covered in relation to the matter. The UUP intervened to say that there was a draft document tabling an adjournment, but the party had then been approached by five other



parties who wished to support and sign the joint UUP/SDLP proposals on the agenda. The DUP said that it was not making any allegations against the UUP for canvassing support for its proposals. The problem was that the document stated that it was proposed by all the parties supporting it and that was not the case - those parties were supporting a joint proposal by two others, not proposing it. The UKUP agreed and said it was now impossible to know who the proposers were from the face of the new document tabled. The SDLP said that the five additional parties were simply joining with the SDLP in proposing the motion. The DUP maintained that was not what the UUP had said. The Chairman said that the draft agenda under consideration was the one tabled under various guises at 18.00. The individual items were the same and were unchanged. Did the meeting accept that as the position? The SDLP said that there was no option but to accept the Chairman's ruling in the matter under rule 25. Also rule 35 was also relevant in relation to the application of sufficient consensus in all formats. The DUP and the UKUP. All others voted against. The meeting then voted on the DUP proposal in relation to 25. The Chairman then took a vote in the matter. This was opposed by the DUP and the UKUP but favoured by all other parties. The Chairman said that the draft was accordingly before the meeting and he proposed first to deal with the various amendments. The UKUP had proposed 6 separate amendments in written form. The DUP then proposed amendments dealing with (a) consideration of the terms/conditions of entry into the talks for Sinn Fein, and (b) that the time for introducing proposals under item 1 of the agenda be limited to 20 minutes (in the event that the first of the UKUP amendments did not succeed). The Chairman said that none of the amendments proposed had been agreed and accordingly 26. The first UKUP amendment was lost on a vote. It was supported by the UKUP and the DUP but all others voted against it.



The Chairman then proposed to take the related DUP amendments on time-limiting contributions. The SDLP said that this amendment had not been tabled or circulated nor was there any consultation on it. The Chairman asked the SDLP to accept his ruling in the matter to take the 2 amendments together. The Irish Government said that it was not necessary in its opinion to have the time-limiting provisions in the actual agenda, and there was also the risk that it could be defeated on a vote. It might be preferable to leave a decision on time-limits until later. Alliance said that whatever document was being considered, the question of the time-limit was not precluded from being raised at a later stage. The DUP said it was proposing the amendment because the SDLP had indicated acceptance of the idea of a time table. The British Government said it might be acceptable to have a proposal in the matter for consideration the following day.

27. The Chairman then put the second UKUP amendment to a vote. It was supported by the DUP and the UKUP. All others voted against. The meeting then voted on the DUP proposal in relation to the time-limit. It too was defeated on the same basis. The remaining UKUP amendments (except for item (f) which was not taken) were also defeated. The Chairman then put the second DUP amendment dealing with the question of consideration of the terms and conditions for the entry of Sinn Fein into the talks being added to the agenda. It was supported by the UDP, PUP, DUP and UKUP, but opposed by the 2 Governments, Alliance, Labour, NIWC and the SDLP.

28. Accordingly, it was not accepted. The Chairman said that none of the amendments proposed had been agreed and accordingly the proposals made by 7 parties in relation to the agenda for the remaining plenary meeting had been agreed by sufficient consensus.



At that point there were calls for a formal vote to be taken on the proposals. They were supported by all delegations except the DUP and the UKUP. The Chairman said that the joint agenda had been adopted by sufficient consensus. The UUP said that with regard to the business of the following day, it wished to raise the question of time-tabling of contributions on item 1 of the agenda - circulation and introduction of proposals regarding the comprehensive agenda. The DUP said it now wanted to get on with the business on the agenda. It was strange that the UUP had voted against the time-tabling proposal earlier in the proceedings. The British Government said that the first item was circulation of proposals, and it would be helpful if written proposals could be submitted by the parties. The Chairman endorsed this point and said that the Chairman of the Business Committee might have his own suggestions in that regard.

29. The Chairman (General de Chastelain) said that as of 30 July last, five sets of proposals on the subject of the comprehensive agenda had been received. Except for those submitted by both Governments, none of the others had been circulated in accordance with the wishes of the parties concerned. The UKUP said that there had to be a time-limit for submission of proposals and it proposed a deadline of 11.00am on Tuesday, 15 October 1996 i.e. later that morning. This was supported by Alliance. The DUP said it would not circulate its proposals until all others had been submitted. The Chairman said the parties had the option of circulating their previous proposals or revised proposals to other parties in advance and he sought guidance on the question of the time of resumption of the meeting. It was agreed to start business again at 12.00 midday and adjourn not later than 17.00.

indicated that other documents would also be released shortly including the DUP paper in July. The UUP said that the joint



30. The SDLP raised the question of the Independent Chairmen issuing a press statement dealing with the position reached in the talks in view of the media speculation that was taking place. The Chairman said that there seemed to be disagreement among the parties on the subject and that the Chairman did not think he could be of any assistance in the matter. Alliance said it was preferable for the Chairmen to make a statement, but it understood the concern of certain parties on the issue, notably the DUP. The SDLP was still of the opinion that the facts should be made known by the Chairmen. It was suggesting a procedural type statement because of the risk that conflicting political statements might be made. It believed that a statement by the Chairmen could be a stabilising influence and it referred to the provisions of rule

33. The UKUP said it would not be bound by this. The UUP said it would be pleased if a factual statement by the Chairman could be made. The situation was that the first joint UUP/SDLP had been released to the press. It was also the case that a representative of the UKUP had appeared on TV attacking the UUP and it had been announced on the 'Newsnight' programme that the UUP had given in on decommissioning. The UKUP said it had been approached by the press and was placed in the position of having to respond to direct questions. It was as guilty as Alliance in this respect, but it had not released any documents. The DUP said that the press had indicated that it received documents from a particular source. The NIWC wondered where the rule on confidentiality stood in view of these developments.

31. The DUP underscored the importance of the rule not being breached by any party. It confirmed that the press had a copy of a document and were running stories based on it. The UUP had indicated that other documents would also be released shortly including the DUP paper in July. The UUP said that the joint



agenda document had been given to the press by a member of the UKUP and that a member of the party's delegation had been talking to the press. Nothing of what had transpired at the meeting had been kept confidential even down to the document supported by 7 of the parties. The Chairman said that it might be possible just to confirm that the press had the correct text. He said it was not clear who had broken the confidentiality rules at that time. The DUP confirmed that it had not leaked to the press. It resented the UUP's remarks and accused the party of giving further documents to the press which it said were not denied by it. The UUP said it had not released the document that day: a journalist had taken a copy out of his own pocket and showed it to him.

32. The SDLP said that surely it was in the best interests of all parties that a party political battle in the media should not occur. That was why it was necessary for the Chairmen to prepare a factual statement dealing with the reaching of agreement on its agenda. The Chairman suggested that a vote be taken on the issue. The wording proposed by the SDLP was to the effect that;

"The meeting today adopted a draft agenda for the remainder of the Opening Plenary Session and that was agreed by sufficient consensus".

33. The UKUP said that this formula would not assist those parties who wished to disassociate themselves from certain comments and that it would be unwise for the Chairmen to act as suggested. The DUP said that a statement of facts should deal with all facts. The purposed SDLP statement would indicate that the DUP supported the joint proposal. It would be necessary to show those parties also had disagreed with the proposal. Anyway it was an academic now in view of the leaks. The Chairman



Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
25 October 1996

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