

CONFIDENTIAL

From: Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
9 July 1996

SUMMARY RECORD OF INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS ON PROCEDURAL GUIDELINES  
AND AGENDA FOR PLENARY SESSION - TUESDAY 9 JULY 1996 (13.00)

Those present:

Independent Chairmen	Government Teams	Parties
Senator Mitchell	British Government	Alliance Party
General de Chastelain	Irish Government	Labour Party
Mr Holkeri		Northern Ireland Women's Coalition
		Social Democratic and Labour Party
		Ulster Democratic Unionist Party
		United Kingdom Unionist Party

1. At 13.10 the Chairman thanked the participants for their presence. He said that clearly there had been changes in circumstances since the schedule was last discussed and considered it appropriate to begin by requesting the parties to express themselves on how best to proceed from here, given these circumstances. He proposed to go round each of the parties and ask if that was agreed. Rev McCrea said that it was not. He said at the Forum session yesterday all the parties had made a statement. As far as his party was concerned they had come today to give notice that they were formally and officially withdrawing from the talks process until the Drumcree situation was resolved. He accused the British Government, at the instigation of the Irish Government, as being responsible for the obstruction of the right of people to proceed on the Queen's highway.

CONFIDENTIAL



2. Dr Alderdice intervened saying to the Chairman on a point of order that the DUP was trying to steer the proceedings in a political direction. Rev McCrea said that there was no such thing as a point of order in the circumstances, in that procedures had yet to be agreed. He was not willing to give way. He continued by saying that it would be unthinkable for his party to continue in these talks whilst the democratic rights of people were being trampled upon. His party would stand in solidarity with the Orangemen at Drumcree. The Chairman said that he had proposed that each of the parties should express themselves on how best to proceed in the particular circumstances. He asked if the participants were in agreement with this.

3. Mr Wilson said that he didn't think that Dr Alderdice had any point of order. He said that he himself wasn't going to make a party political speech. The purpose of the talks was for the parties to try to understand each other's positions and Dr Alderdice should try to listen to the DUP and UKUP views. He said that the Province was in crisis this morning and in the circumstances he would not be able to sit and listen to the British and Irish Governments, who were responsible for the situation. There was much interruption at this point. The Chairman asked for order. Mr Wilson said that he didn't wish to listen to the British and Irish Governments at the present time. Every decision affecting Northern Ireland seemed to emanate from the bunker known as Maryfield. The present gathering was a sham and a disgrace. There was little in it that was due to democracy. He said that Mr Ancram might smile and evince disdain but the Province was on a knife edge due to the action of the two governments. He said thank you to the Chairman for permitting him to speak, announced that he was now withdrawing from the



discussions, and warned the other parties that whatever they decided in the unionist absence would not stick. He then rose and left the discussions along with the DUP representatives.

4. The Minister of State said that he was glad that the participants had met today. He said that on behalf of the British Government he wished to assure the people of Northern Ireland that the decision on Drumcree had been made by the Chief Constable, and not by the government. He urged people to support the police and urged dialogue in order to resolve the situation. He described Mr Wilson's comments as fantastic and unreal. The Minister of State (Mr Coveney) said that the Irish Government entirely supported Mr Ancram's statement.

5. Dr Alderdice said to the Chairmen that they had just witnessed an admirable example (by the DUP and UKUP) of the robust approach in Northern Ireland politics, whereby others were not permitted to get a word in edgeways. There appeared to be an eleven-year cycle - 1974, 1985, 1996 - in Northern Ireland politics, characterised by an utter disregard for truth. The whole business of Drumcree was an attempt to subvert democracy. Those who bore the responsibility were those responsible for bringing mobs onto the streets, thereby bringing the community to the very brink. It was always somebody else's fault. Until we all accepted responsibility for our own future, things would not improve. The Governments had to continue to protect Northern Ireland from the consequences of behaviour such as that relating to Drumcree. In 1974 the government had not been prepared to see the sewage back up into the streets and had stepped in and backed down. The leading Northern Ireland politicians were still not prepared to take responsibility. The situation was now critical. The Northern Ireland politicians had to take responsibility or



there was no future for the Province. The participants had agreed a schedule but now the unionist parties had walked out. This removed the possibility of consensus and it would be futile to try to continue without them; the talks could only become a laughing stock if this were attempted. It therefore seemed appropriate to put the process on a life support machine until such time as their colleagues chose to return. But this had to be reasonably soon. He reminded the Chairman of the aim to have a plenary at the end of July. He went on to allude to shouting and screaming at the Forum yesterday by those who were out to incite violence and mob rule. The talks were effectively going into suspense because of the actions of the unionists. He personally felt the whole affair painful and saw the consequences only as more violence, coffins and grieving. He thanked the Chairman and his two colleagues for their efforts and said that even their efforts could be to no avail in these circumstances.

6. Mr Curran said that it would be appropriate for his colleague, Mr Casey, who was mayor of Craigavon, to speak for his party. Mr Casey said that as mayor he had asked both parties to the dispute at Drumcree to try to resolve the matter. This was difficult given the polka danced by Messrs Trimble and Paisley last year and the striking of a medal, both of which had made a great impression on the people of Garvaghy. He understood the Catholic psyche. He said that the Orangemen had refused to meet with himself, the Archbishop or the residents to discuss the crisis. He had a gut feeling of a doom scenario. He had been present last night when the body of the young taxi driver had been brought home. It was one of the consequences of the intransigence of people on both sides. He was sorry that the unionists had left the discussion. He would have liked to say to them that there were bound to be more coffins, more widows and more orphans, with



more Catholic people forced from their homes. He had heard the Rev McCrea singing "How Great Thou Art", listen to a sermon about being reconciled to his brother, then leave the service knowing full well that he was going to be embroiled in strife with his brother. The Ulster Protestant God seemed to be exclusively a unionist God. He said that he had tried to understand the ethos of Protestantism over 69 years. Orangeism was extreme Protestantism. There was presently a charade. The unionists were treating the talks as a joke. It was up to the two governments to sort out the matter. There was no point in going on at present.

7. Ms Blood said that she was a community worker on the Shankill Road. The Drumcree affair had been blown up into a major crisis. She noted that Mr Wilson hadn't been prepared to continue with the present discussions but reminded Mr Ancram and Dr Alderdice that those who had left were still the elected representatives of a large number of other people. Either those people were stupid or there was a problem to be resolved. The only future was for all of the participants to get together to discuss and resolve that problem. It was never going to be easy. The core of people in Northern Ireland had persisted and the result was the ceasefire. Her party was appalled at the murder of Mr McGoldrick. They were committed to the talks process. As a trade union representative she wouldn't condemn the walk out - she had done it herself - but there was a need for politicians to demonstrate leadership. She would not wish the talks process to end and pleaded for the shutters not to be pulled down.

8. Mr Farren apologised for the absence of Mr Mallon and said that it would be appropriate if the discussion group conveyed sympathy to the family of Mr McGoldrick. His murder and the events at Drumcree were symptomatic of the problems the



participants had come to address. He had a hope and a determination that through the efforts of the participants Drumcree would become a crisis of the past. But this needed the representation of all. His party had come to the idea that the rules problem could be resolved and had still this degree of confidence. He advised against precipitate actions and considered that the parties present should remain available to each other over the next few days. Progress would inevitably be very limited without the presence of the unionists; hopefully they would be back within a week or so. His party remained committed to the process. The Minister of State endorsed Mr Farren's comments.

9. The Chairman asked if there were any other comments. There were none. He thanked those who had spoken and said it seemed that the best course of action, for the consideration of, and determination by, the participants, was to combine the views expressed. He suggested that bilaterals continue on the expectation that discussions could resume next week at a time to be determined by consultation between the Chairmen and the parties. On this basis the talks would resume next Tuesday, but in bilateral format and remain subject to the call of the chair in relation to full discussions.

10. Mr Farren said that it was likely that the media would seek some comment from the Chairman. The Chairman said that he was going to come to that. The present circumstances were unusual, to say the least. He proposed that the Chairman should issue a statement to the effect that the talks were proceeding according to the agreed schedule and that a meeting of the full group would be convened next week subject to consultation with the parties. He asked if everyone agreed. There was no dissent and he



adjourned the discussions at 13.50 subject to the call of the chair.

[Signed]

Independent Chairmen Notetakers  
9 July 1996

OIC/41