

45 23 JUN 1998
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FROM: ALAN TIPPING
Talks Secretariat
20 June 1996

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B
PS/Sir John Wheeler (L,B&DFP) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (L,B&DENI) - B
PS/Malcom Moss (L,DOE&DHSS) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (L,DED&DANI) - B
PS/PUS (L&B) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (L&B) - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Legge - B
Mr Leach (L&B) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Wood (L&B) - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Currie - B
Mr Hill (L&B) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Stephens - B
Ms Checksfield - B
Miss Harrison (L&B) - B
Ms Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (L&B) - B
Ms Collins, Cab Office via IPL-B
Mr O'Mahony, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
HMA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
Mrs McNally (L&B) - B

FILE NOTE

TALKS BILATERAL WITH WOMEN'S COALITION: 20 JUNE 1996

Michael Ancram held bilateral consultations with the Northern Ireland Women's Coalition, represented by Pearl Sagar, Bronagh Hinds and Avila Kilmurray, on 20 June at 1500 hours.

2. Pearl Sagar opened by stating that they were quite happy with the rules of procedure. They did want to find ways of closing the procedural gap, narrow the rules and ensure no holes remained; their aim was to enable all parties to come on board.

3. The Minister related that there was an amount of misunderstanding over rules of procedure but work is being done at present. In effect it would be a Chairman's handbook. But it can

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be expected that everyone will interpret it in their own way. The Government's position is that they will describe the nature of how business will operate. But the Ground Rules were there and they would not change.

4. Bronagh Hinds asked if the Ground Rules did change how would that affect the Forum.

5. The Minister gave the view that for that to happen would expose the whole process to legal challenge and everything would stop. However, para 2 of the Ground Rules provide for an open agenda and subject to the fact that agreement is reached in a broadly based way the agenda is flexible.

6. Pearl Sagar was concerned to strike a balance between giving space to the other parties and political substance in Ground Rules and the issue of "nothing agreed until everything agreed".

7. Minister's view was that it was a matter of practical reality rather than doctrine and on that basis the "nothing agreed until everything agreed" would hold.

8. Bronagh Hinds was concerned about the Secretary of State's powers in enabling the Forum to sit and how it would function if talks broke down.

9. The Minister stated that if talks halted the Forum would halt as the Forum flowed from talks. The idea was to negotiate on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, leaving two days for the Forum. Powers were there to prevent the parties stopping talks through Forum sittings.

10. Pearl Sagar gave the view that moves were afoot to limit attendance at Committee to elected members and that this would disadvantage smaller parties. Also there was concern that the Forum would try to elect a Chairperson from within the body.

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11. The Minister's view was that since the rules of election allowed for smaller parties to come on board then the process should try to accommodate them. However, having set the Ground Rules it was for the parties to reach agreement. As to timetable there was likely to be some movement on procedures by Monday/Tuesday.

12. Avila Kilmurray made the point that the Unionists would be big on decommissioning and asked was there a process for bringing the rhetoric down and increasing the work in committee.

13. The Minister stated that he didn't want to do anything before the agenda was set. Then was the time to move on substantive negotiations and decommissioning.

(Signed)

ALAN TIPPING
Talks Secretariat

Mr Beaton - B
Mr Currie - B
Mr Hill (LAS) - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Macca - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Checksfield - B
Miss Harrison (LAS) - B
Mr Mapstone - B
Mr Whysall (LAS) - B
Mr Collins, Cab Office via 191-B
Mr O'Mahony, TAU - B
Mr Lamont, RID - B
RPA Dublin - B
Mr Westmacott (via RID) - B
Mr Campbell-Bannerman - B
[redacted] (LAS) - B

MINISTER OF STATE'S MEETING WITH THE PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY:
20 JUNE 1996

The meeting began at 12.55 pm and was attended by Mr Irvine and Mr Spence.

Mr Irvine said that the PUP considered the debate on the Ground Rules to be minor. The more important issue was the role of the Chairman. They wanted the powers of the Chairman to be maintained. Mr Irvine did not see a link between the powers of the Chairman and Northern Ireland's constitutional position.