

UUP TALKS BULLETIN

This morning the Plenary met to discuss the Alliance Party's indictment of the PUP and UDP for the CLMC threat to Billy Wright and Alex Kerr, the UUP and the DUP for Drumcree and the DUP for Willie McCrea's appearance on a platform in support of Billy Wright. The Alliance agreed to withdraw their case against the PUP and UDP as last week was taken up with discussion and a ruling on that issue. Alliance also agreed to remove their reference to slogans in support of Mid-Ulster UVF on the platform in Portadown.

The UUP was very brief in its response to the spurious allegation against ourselves, as were the DUP in response to the allegations against them. We believe that the Alliance can make no case that the UUP has broken the Mitchell Principles. The British and Irish Governments will be making their ruling on Monday morning when the Talks resume. We will then be seeking time to debate their reasoning, as we did after their ruling on the PUP and UDP. It is to be hoped that this will conclude this cynical time-wasting exercise by the Alliance.

Yesterday and today, when not in Plenary, time was spent in bilateral meetings. We are still involved in a sub-committee with the SDLP to try to agree a framework agenda for the three-stranded talks. Some progress has been made in this regard. We have also been heavily committed in discussions with HMG and the Irish Government regarding the legislation to provide for a Verification Commission which can operate in both jurisdictions. The UUP has worked very hard to pressure the Governments, particularly the Irish Government, to produce this legislation as they promised at the start of the year. The political will did not exist previously. The DUP and UKUP have not engaged in discussions with the objective of ensuring the legislation is adequate. The substantial point of difference is the point at which the Commission is set up. We want to see a Commission up and running, gathering information, so that if the IRA calls a ceasefire, they are entering into an agreed process of decommissioning. The Governments, in that circumstance, want Sinn Fein to face a trivial sub-committee which would not have the necessary expertise.

NOTE : THE AGRICULTURE AND HEALTH COMMITTEES OF THE FORUM WILL MEET ON THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER TO TAKE ORAL EVIDENCE. THE PARADES AND EDUCATION WILL ALSO MEET ON THAT DAY.

18 SEPTEMBER 1996