

9th June 1996

Meeting between UUP and Senator Mitchell, Europa Hotel
Belfast, 2.00pm-3.00pm

Present; UUP D Trimble, J Taylor, R Empey.
G Mitchell, Gen. DeC., Martha Pope, messrs Angel
and Myrsky.

After the pleasantries, UUP made it clear that there were a significant number of difficulties surrounding the Senator's appointment as Chairman. UUP pointed out that Spring, Reynolds Provos etc in pushing his Chairmanship, were in fact adding to Unionist disquiet over his Irish American connections with the possibility of him coming under pressure from Clinton's Irish American supporters especially in election year.

The Senator indicated that he understood this, but stressed that under no circumstances would he allow anybody pressurise him. He said that if he was Chairman, he would act impartially and resist any outside pressure. His main interest was that lives were at stake, and if he could help he felt obliged to do so.

UUP proceeded to set the scene of actions by the two Govts. during the last 2 weeks; the actions of Spring in bullying HMG; the dictatorial methods by which the agenda was produced; the failure of Mayhew to respond to our letter of Friday indicating that the agenda was unacceptable, but offering discussions on same; the lack of any opportunity either to discuss the agenda or discuss and ratify the appointment of a Chairman.

UUP further told the Senator that the process could only succeed if the participants had ownership; this was presently being denied them; we stressed that there was a significant section of opinion within the Forum/Talks which was opposed to his Chairmanship; that under the proposals for establishing 'sufficient consensus' a clear majority of 'both traditions' required to support any proposals.

The Senator accepted that he could not perform his role if his appointment was opposed by a significant section of the delegates, and it would be his desire to ensure that all the participants did have ownership of the agenda and his appointment. He pointed out that as Leader of the Senate for 6 years he had to work closely with people like Bob Dole, and throughout that time he had never forced people into things, and had maintained a good relationship with all Senators; he emphasised that

the most important thing was to ensure that people were not taken by surprise (have things bounced on them).

UUP said that this was the way things were being done here at present and we were fed up with dictatorial methods being employed by the Govts.

The Senator said that he would be meeting the Govts later that day, and would make clear his desire to have everybody involved in the operation of the process.

UUP also referred to the matter of staffing the Chairman's office.

The Senator introduced his own personal staff, and agreed that any persons involved would have to be completely independent.

UUP said that any Irish civil servants would be completely unacceptable, as would secondees from NIO or the inter Government liaison group. (the Senator seemed sympathetic to this viewpoint)

As the meeting drew to a close, UUP stressed that there two paths that could be followed; either all were given an opportunity to shape and participate in the process, with an independent Chairman and staff, or the two Govts could try to 'railroad' their own agenda through. UUP indicated that if the latter was to happen, we would 'railroad' back! We pointed out what had happened to the decommissioning issue on the agenda, that in fact the Govts had resiled from their own statement that it should be addressed 'at that stage' meaning at the point where the Senator's principles were being accepted.

In conclusion, the Senator promised that he would, if given the chance, ensure that he conducted affairs in a genuinely impartial way; he would not be pressurised or influenced from outside sources.

UUP indicated that we would determine our approach on Monday, but could assure the Senator that in the event of a decision by the Govts to proceed along present lines, we would not side with them against other Unionists.
