

## FAX SHEET

To: Annette Cummins

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From: Brendan Callaghan

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Subject: Interviews with Ministers and Michael Antram

Message:

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MICHAEL ANCRAM - EXIT DOORSTEP, CASTLE BUILDINGS - 24 JULY 1996

ANCRAM:

Well, we have a very long day. Quite a lot of it spent in bilaterals with various parties, and then we met together in our informal grouping tonight and we discussed where we had got to with the rules of procedure. I believe that after a lot of discussion we are now close to rules of procedure which I hope will be agreed on Monday. Obviously they can't be agreed until Monday because they can only be agreed in Plenary and we can't have a Plenary until Monday. Tomorrow we've got another set of important areas to look at and in particular the agenda for the opening Plenary which has also got to be agreed, and agreed in a Plenary, again I hope on Monday. So tomorrow we will be making, I hope, positive steps forward on the agenda so that when we get to Monday we can not only make progress in terms of agreement, but actually move forward constructively through the opening agenda after that.

Q: Why do you have to wait until Monday Minister?

ANCRAM:

Because you have to have a Plenary in order to take these decisions and it was announced some time ago that we couldn't have a Plenary until Monday because certain parties did not have the representatives who are entitled to attend Plenaries here until Monday for reasons which alerted to the Chairman some time ago.

Q: How would you assess what has happened today?

ANCRAM:

It's steady progress and important progress, because I think we all do realise now that the valuable discussions we have had on the rules of procedure have taken a very long time. We now have to come to a decision on them and, as I say, I think we now have a set of rules of procedure which I hope will be agreed on Monday, but we haven't yet addressed the question of the opening agenda. We need to do that tomorrow. We need to do it urgently. And along with that I hope that we can look at how we can make sure that in the time available from Monday morning onwards we can make the most progress possible in order to indicate, as we want to, that these talks are moving forward and moving forward constructively.

Q: How heartened are you that even though nobody is getting everything they wanted, nobody is wanting to walk away from this?

ANCRAM:

Well what we are doing is essentially a very democratic process and we are listening to the views of all those who are there and we are trying to reach agreement, because we have always said that the soundest basis for taking this process forward is that of consensus. And therefore it has taken some time to reach the position we are now in and I am delighted that we are all still there and we are all still talking and we are all still indicating our intention to make sure that we can move forward constructively. I know that there is impatience and frustration among some people who would like to see the process moving forward faster, but at the same time I think that the progress we are making and have made today is something on which we can hold some good hope that we can make even more constructive progress over the next few days.

Q: To what do you attribute such sudden progress after so many days of deadlock?

ANCRAM:

I don't think it's sudden progress. We've been looking at these rules of procedure for a very long time, but although the progress has been slow it has been steady and it has been well debated and well founded. What we've now got to do is to accept that we have got to a stage where decisions have to be made. I believe these rules of procedure are the right rules to take us through the negotiations in the future and we've got to now make sure that on Monday we agree those rules, we agree the agenda, and we move forward from there.

ends.



NORA OWEN - EXIT DOORSTEP, CASTLE BUILDINGS - 24 JULY 1996

MRS OWEN:

We've had a very long day's work today on top of the last two days. We have not managed to actually adopt the compromise text that the Chairman put up, but we have made progress and tomorrow there will be discussions on the agenda and on Monday it is hoped that at the Plenary session it will be possible to proceed to adopt the rules of procedure and, hopefully, ratify the agenda for the opening Plenary session.

Q: You said this morning that people need a sense that the talks are getting somewhere - has that happened today?

MRS OWEN:

Yes. We've had over 40 days of discussions about the rules of procedure. Today I suppose you could say we have reached finality on the discussions on the paper of the rules of procedure in the sense that a compromise text was put by the Chairman to the round table discussions now. And tomorrow we will have a further discussion on the agenda and on Monday it is proposed to have a Plenary session at which I hope we will be able to ratify them. The message that the Irish Government has been giving all along is that we want to see progress towards the substantive issues. It's disappointing we haven't actually got the full agreement on the rules of procedure tonight, but I think we have made progress to be able to get that agreement on Monday.

Q: So the reason you haven't done that tonight is because the necessary mechanism for doing so won't be in place until Monday...

MRS OWEN:

Well that is a problem. We haven't actually got the rules of procedure in place and that is why we have been conducting the discussions on the rules of procedure in the informal, round table format. We have to have a Plenary to ratify the rules and that is what we will do on Monday, ratify the necessary part of the rules in order to ratify the remainder part of the rules and that's where we are proceeding to now. So I hope that the message will go out that we are nearing the end of this particular procedure in getting the rules of procedure agreed, the agenda hopefully will be discussed and progress will be made tomorrow and on Monday we will go into Plenary session. Thankyou very much.

ends