

62/26/9
PST; PSS; Ministers Owen,
de Rossa & Taylor; Attorney
General; Minister of State
Coveney; Messrs. Teahon,
Donlon & Dalton; Ambs.
London and Washington; Joint
Secretary; Counsellors A-I.

Confidential

Multi-Party Talks

Daily Report - 25 September 1996

1. Today was a fairly uneventful day at Castle Buildings. The Government delegation, led by Minister Coveney, had bilaterals with the Chairmen, the British Government, the SDLP and the NI Women's Coalition. The Chairmen met most of the parties in a round of individual meetings.
2. The joint paper setting out a scenario for the transition into substantive talks was agreed between the two Governments.* The British Government had hoped to be able to hand it over to David Trimble this afternoon. In the event, the UUP leader disappeared abruptly and remained out of contact until 6pm, when British officials reached him and arranged to forward the paper to him in London (where he will be this evening). Trimble undertook to get back with a reaction by mid-morning tomorrow.
3. Having returned from the BIPB meeting in Bath primarily to convey this paper to Trimble, the Secretary of State was somewhat disgruntled to find that the UUP leader, who had been put on notice to expect it, had departed around midday. We recalled the even greater discourtesy afforded to the Tánaiste by Trimble's recent absence from a firmly scheduled meeting.
4. Senator Mitchell briefed the Government delegation on his round of bilaterals with the parties (he has seen all but the UUP). The DUP and the UKUP had made a strong pitch for the Plenary to be reconvened in order to consider the next item on the agenda for the remainder of the opening Plenary. The Senator rightly suspected a DUP/UKUP manoeuvre to step up the pressure on Trimble in order to thwart the deal which they believe to be imminent between the two Governments and the UUP on the handling of decommissioning. It would be very difficult, however, to avoid complying with this request.
5. Having taken advice from the Government delegation, who noted the probability of a trilateral with the UUP on Monday afternoon (and the desirability of Trimble not being exposed to Plenary pressure in advance of it), the Chairman decided to convene the Plenary for Tuesday morning. He also envisaged using that session to conclude the confidentiality discussion and to propose the formal publication of the rules of procedure.
6. We suggested that, while it would not be possible to prevent a degree of substantive debate on decommissioning at next week's Plenary, the Chair should keep the focus firmly on the procedural nature of the discussion.

* NEG 430/96, as previously circulated

- (7)
7. Senator Mitchell also told the two Governments that, further to a request from President Clinton to assist with the latter's preparations for two forthcoming TV election debates (on 6 and 16 October), he would be returning to the US now and would be absent from the talks for a few weeks. He would be back at some stage between 18 October and the end of the month.
 8. The SDLP had a bilateral with the UUP this morning, at which one point of interest was that the latter indicated that Cabinet approval and publication of the draft legislation in both jurisdictions would suffice to meet their concerns (i.e., they were not insisting that enactment would have to be awaited). It also emerged that the UUP were working on a paper on decommissioning which they intended to hand to the British Government next Monday. The UUP also proposed further contact with the SDLP on the comprehensive agenda.

David Donoghue

David Donoghue
25 September 1996