

CONFIDENTIAL

FROM: TED HALLETT  
8 October 1997

INT 47/97

cc: as attached

## NOTE FOR THE RECORD

### TALKS: TUESDAY 7 OCTOBER 1997

#### SUMMARY

The day's business consisted of the formal launch of Strands One, Two and Three. There were also brief meetings with the Irish and with the Irish and the Independent Chairmen. The proceedings were generally uncontentious apart from a sharp UUP objection to a suggestion by Mr Murphy that the Irish might be briefed "on a daily basis" about Strand One and Mr Ken Maginnis' (UUP) description of Sinn Fein as "unreconstructed terrorists", which prompted Senator Mitchell to call on all parties to use restrained language both inside and outside the talks process.

#### MEETING WITH THE IRISH

A short bilateral meeting with the Irish, at official level, took place at 9 am. Mr Gallagher asked whether it was the British Government's intention that the joint paper on a new agreement should be closely linked to the Framework document. Mr Thomas agreed that it should, as Frameworks represented the two Governments' best effort at defining the common ground.

There was inconclusive discussion of the British proposal to meld Strand Three Liaison meetings with Strand Two. Mr Gallagher had no personal objection, but consultation with some of the parties had suggested difficulties. It was agreed to keep the idea under review with no definite decision at this stage.

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

The Irish expressed a preference for the two Governments to produce joint papers on the Strand Two issues. Mr Thomas replied that this might not be possible on all issues as experience suggested that it was difficult to agree joint papers quickly. In any event, there would be close co-operation between the two Governments.

The Irish asked for our assessment of Mr Trimble's approach to Strand Two. Mr Thomas thought he intended to be constructive. He urged the Irish not to take too sceptical a view of the UUP 1992 paper which contained some relatively forward ideas on North/South Institutions. Mr Donoghue replied that the Irish saw that paper as largely tactical.

The Irish requested sight of the Strand One minutes as, they claimed, had been the case with the 1992 talks. Mr Thomas was not sure that that would be possible but undertook to brief the Irish promptly about Strand One proceedings.

The two sides expressed concern about the Chairman's proposed limitation on numbers for Strand Two. They agreed that it would be better to adhere to the plenary position of 3 + 5 for the two Governments.

## STRAND ONE

Strand One commenced at 10.10 am with Mr Murphy in the chair.

Mr Murphy welcomed the participants, drew attention to the British Government's dual role as Chairman and participant, and expressed a determination to be impartial. He proposed, as agreed at the Business Committee last week, an opening round of statements, followed by a brief discussion of procedural matters.

Mr Adams (Sinn Fein) placed on record his opposition to the UK as Chairman of Strand One, given the British Government's support for partition and the status quo. Mr Murphy replied that the Rules of Procedure had been agreed long ago and would now be difficult to change. The British Government would be impartial.

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Smyth (PUP) stressed that, in contrast to Sinn Fein, his party welcomed UK Chairmanship.

Mr Murphy then invited the parties to make opening statements. All except the PUP and the UUP read from prepared texts. These have been circulated separately.

Mr Ervine (PUP) expressed willingness to consider the ideas of others. The objective of the process should be to create a united community in Northern Ireland based on the "politics of inclusion". He hoped all participants would be willing to defend whatever agreements emerged from the process.

Mr Empey (UUP) did not read out his party's statement, but made some general remarks. He expressed regret that not all parties were present. Those who sought to "smash the Union" had failed through violence and would not succeed through dialogue. The process could only succeed if all parties recognised that the fundamental framework was maintenance of the Union. There were many areas of potential common ground on economic and social issues. The process should attempt to build on those. Attempts to "smash the Union" would run up against a brick wall.

After reading the British Government's opening statement, Mr Murphy invited discussion on procedural matters. There were alternative approaches: either a day a week to each Strand or blocks of time devoted to particular issues.

Lord Alderdice (Alliance) said that all three Strands should be kept moving concurrently. Focusing on particular issues could quickly lead to deadlock.

Mr Mallon (SDLP) urged moving quickly to the "core issues" rather than having set-piece debates on general principles.

Mr Murphy suggested that advance circulation of short papers on general principles might avoid the need for protracted discussion.

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

Mrs McWilliams (Women's Coalition) asked for briefing on the 1991/92 talks. Mr Murphy said that the Framework Documents reflected what had emerged from 1991/92 but further background could be provided if needed.

Mr Smith (PUP) suggested that Strand One could reach early agreement in view of the groundwork which had been done in 1991/92. Mr Empey (UUP) disagreed. We were now in a new set of negotiations and should not look back to 1992. It should not be assumed that any agreement reached in 1992 were still valid. Mr Murphy accepted that anything agreed in 1992 was not binding, but it provided useful background to the present discussions.

Mr Empey (UUP) objected to Mr Murphy's unscripted proposal to brief the Irish delegation "on a daily basis" on Strand One proceedings. He saw no grounds for briefings of this frequency. Mr Murphy said that his suggestion was informal and was not contained in his written text. If there were objections, he would reconsider the matter.

Mr Adams (Sinn Fein) had no strong views on how business was handled as long as the process moved quickly to the core elements. He expressed concern at the refusal of the Unionist parties to talk directly to Sinn Fein. Progress would not be possible if parties refused to engage with each other.

Lord Alderdice (Alliance) expressed surprise at Mr Empey's remarks about the 1992 talks. Although nothing had been definitively agreed, a number of papers had been "banked" and much of the Frameworks text on Strand One had been based on that. Mr Empey replied that it was open to parties to revisit proposals from the earlier talks, but the Frameworks text had added "unacceptable elements".

Mr Murphy concluded that Strand One might resume on Monday, and Strand Two on Tuesday, of next week, subject to the views of the Business Committee. All sides clearly wished to move quickly to the core issues. One approach would be to

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

**CONFIDENTIAL**

take agenda headings one at a time, on the basis of papers from each of the participants, limited to two sides of paper circulated no later than noon on the preceding Friday. This was agreed. A short press communiqué summarising the Strand One proceedings was agreed.

**MEETING WITH THE CHAIRMEN AND THE IRISH DELEGATION**

A meeting with the Chairmen and the Irish delegation took place at 13.45.

Senator Mitchell wanted views on procedural issues. He proposed, for the present, to take each Strand a day at a time.

Mr Gallagher stressed the need for flexibility over timing, given that Irish Cabinet meetings were normally held on Tuesdays. Mr Murphy suggested that it was not necessary to have a separate day for Strand Three. It was agreed that next week Strand One will take place on Monday and Strand Two on Tuesday, but this could be reviewed for subsequent weeks.

Senator Mitchell was flexible on the composition of delegations to the sub-committees on decommissioning and confidence building measures. Mr Thomas said that the UK might want a larger representation in view of the range of issues to be covered. Senator Mitchell said this might be raised at the Business Committee.

**MEETING WITH THE PUP**

A brief bilateral meeting took place at 14.20 with Mr "Plum" Smith of the PUP. He pressed for an increase the number of PUP delegates for whom travel and subsistence expenses were paid from 12 to 18, to take account of the move to substantive dialogue in the Three Strands. His party could not conduct business effectively with their present number. Mr Murphy agreed to consider the proposal, but could not give a definite reply at this stage. It would be necessary to treat all

**CONFIDENTIAL**

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

parties equally and to agree with the Irish Government, who were jointly financing the process.

## STRAND TWO

The opening meeting of Strand Two commenced at 14.40 with Senator Mitchell in the Chair. Senator Mitchell outlined his approach to the handling of business, proposing, for the present, that each Strand meet for the one day each week. He would propose to take Strand Two agenda items one week at a time and invite the parties to submit papers in advance by 2.00pm on Monday, to enable the other parties to consider them before each Strand Two meeting. There had been no agreement on the size of delegations for Strand Two. The Business Committee should decide. In contrast to previous procedure in the Talks, it was not his intention to seek agreement on each agenda item before proceeding to the next. He would address all 3 subjects currently on the agenda before attempting to draw conclusions. Senator Mitchell then invited the parties and the two Governments to make their opening statements. All except the PUP and the UUP spoke from prepared texts, which have been circulated separately.

Mr Ervine (PUP), said that it was necessary to ground the process on reality. He was not unduly concerned about Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution since the Irish Government had no means of putting them into practice, but they were not based on reality and were an insult to the Unionists, giving rise to difficulty in the North/South relationship. The Republic must not ask the impossible of Unionists. It would be foolish, however, to ignore the ills of the past regarding the treatment of Northern Nationalists.

Mr Ken Maginnis (UUP) did not speak to the UUP text, (circulated subsequently) but launched an attack on the Sinn Fein delegation, referring to them as "un-reconstructed terrorists". References to "smashing the union" would not produce the trust necessary for a successful outcome to the Talks process. He complained about the British Government's use of terms such as "the island of Ireland", which

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

gave offence to Unionists. There had been continuous concessions to the "terrorists" in order to bring them to "the table of democracy".

Mrs McWilliams (Women's Coalition) protested at Mr Maginnis' use of the term "un-reconstructed terrorists". Mr Adams (Sinn Fein) argued that each participant should be described by its chosen name.

Undaunted, Mr Ken Maginnis continued by arguing that it was not helpful for Irish Ministers to say that a united Ireland was in the best interests of all the people of Ireland. This did not stand up to close analysis. Proposals for intensified North/South relations contained more pitfalls than benefits for Unionists. The Irish Government should adopt a mature attitude to Northern Ireland as a separate political entity. Democracy and consent were the fundamental realities on which the present process was based.

Senator Mitchell urged all the participants to use restrained language both inside and outside the Talks process.

Mr Martin McGuinness (Sinn Fein) said that he has already expressed regret publicly about his reference to "smashing the Union", and agreed that it was desirable to use less emotive language. He hoped other parties would show similar restraint.

Mr Smyth (PUP) saw difficulty in negotiating with Sinn Fein if they insisted that a united Ireland was the only solution. Mr Adams (Sinn Fein) replied that in doing so Sinn Fein was merely indicating its views. He was perfectly willing to listen to contrary views from other parties.

Mr Mallon (SDLP) stressed the need to avoid set-piece discussion and move to real debate on the key issues. Senator Mitchell replied that that was his intention. He hoped there would be a full day of substantive discussion next week.

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks

CONFIDENTIAL

**STRAND THREE**

Strand Three was launched at a brief meeting of the two Governments at 18.30. The two Governments exchanged prepared texts (circulated separately) and made some general remarks. Ms O'Donnell stressed the significance of the day and expressed the hope that all parties would eventually participate in the process. Both Governments were prepared to consider a new and more broadly based agreement, while not distancing themselves from the Anglo-Irish Agreement which was a valuable expression of the Anglo-Irish relationship. It met the Nationalist wish for the Irish Government to be a guardian of their interests, but she recognised that Unionist opposition to the Agreement had not abated. The Joint Framework Document set out the parameters for future inter-governmental structures. It might be necessary to revisit the Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council and to take account of the prospect of constitutional change within the UK. It was also necessary to preserve the British/Irish Inter-Parliamentary body. It would be important to keep the parties informed of progress in Strand Three in order to give them a sense of ownership of the outcome.

Mr Murphy also welcomed the launch of Strand Three. It would certainly be less contentious than Strand Two. The relationship between the two Governments was excellent. He expressed regret at Mr Burke's resignation. He agreed on the need for early understanding on the elements of a new British/Irish Agreement. The Parliamentary Body was valuable. Consideration might also be given to possible links with the future Scottish and Welsh Assemblies.

Mr O'Donoghue welcomed the close relationship established between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach. He understood that the Prime Minister would be seeing Mr Trimble shortly and hoped that the Irish could be kept informed of UUP intentions.

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks



CONFIDENTIAL

Mr Murphy said he was convinced that Mr Trimble intended to remain in the process, but it was clear that the UUP were not comfortable about being in the same room as Sinn Fein.

Mr O'Donoghue said the Irish had considered the UK suggestion of melding Strand Three liaison with Strand Two. Having consulted some of the parties, however, they felt this might be a focus of suspicion. Mr Murphy said we were in no rush to take a definite decision. It was agreed that this matter should be kept under review.

Ms O'Donnell hoped that agreement could be reached on the joint paper on a new agreement in time for circulation to the parties next week.

It was agreed that a flexible approach should be adopted to the timing and frequency of Strand Three meetings. A separate day was probably not necessary for Strand Three, which might normally take place on the same day as Strand Two.

(Signed)

TED HALLETT

CONFIDENTIAL

HK/Talks