

MEETING BETWEEN UUUC/SDLP 12 FEBRUARY 1976

PRESENT: Chairman Mr Fitt Mr West Mr Beattie
Dr Oliver Dr Hume Dr Paisley Mr Armstrong
Dr Hayes Mr Currie Mr Baird Mr M Smyth
Mr Devlin Capt Ardill Mr Allen
Mr Dunlop Mr Wright

1. The Chairman opened by asking the parties to meet again on Monday. The situation in the community was critical and there might well be disturbances over the weekend. The parties might in any case want to exchange papers or to consult other parties in the event of difficulties. Mr West said UUUC were quite happy to comply. Mr Fitt said SDLP intended to take part in meaningful talks - only if the talks were realistic and likely to lead somewhere would they continue on Monday.
2. The Chairman explained the procedure for verbatim recording. It was open to any member to ask to be recorded or not to be recorded. Hansard was called in at the request of Mr West and the remainder of the meeting was on the record.
3. Mr West said they had come there to talk under three overriding conditions (a) no negotiation on an institutionalised Council of Ireland, (b) no negotiation on the proposition that any party should have a place in government as of right, and (c) the firm understanding that UUUC would not under any circumstances agree to serve in government with SDLP. The Sunningdale parties could form a government if they had a majority.
4. Mr West said the Convention Report should allay the fears of ^{ministers} ~~Ministers~~ with the strong committee system and a Bill of Rights. There was also the PR system of voting.
5. Mr Hume said SDLP regarded the inter-party talks as an important means of reaching agreement on the form of government required by par 24 of the White Paper which would have support in both parts of the community. They regarded a Hansarded discussion as little better than a meeting of the whole Convention and not an ideal medium for negotiation.
6. Mr Hume outlined SDLP position - they believed that only a government representative of both traditions and drawing the support of all sections of the community could meet the needs of NI at the present time. Normally they disliked contrived solutions, but it was a contrived situation they had to deal with. Until a normal political situation was reached, they believed only

partnership in government would work. When that stage had been reached, they would be quite happy, in the ordinary play of politics to see a majority type government. He asked UUUC to say why they objected to SDLP in government. If they were afraid to trust them because they were Republicans, it seemed strange that UUUC should be suggesting that the country could be run by a coalition of SDLP and less dependable Unionists than UUUC. They had made their position clear on the constitutional status of NI which they had accepted. They would not agree to any change which had not the support of the majority of the people. Equally they were happy to allow relationships between the two parts of Ireland to evolve at its own speed as the fears and tensions were dissipated by working together in a spirit of co-operation and reconciliation.

7. Mr Fitt asked whether UUUC were saying that they would never serve in a cabinet with SDLP. Mr West said they could not bind the politicians of the future, but for today and as far as he could see ahead, the answer was no. Mr Fitt asked whether if SDLP along with Alliance and UPNI wanted to form a coalition including UUUC, whether UUUC would serve in such a government. Mr West said No, but UUUC would accept the verdict of the electorate and form a loyal opposition.
8. Mr Devlin asked for a 10 minute adjournment. Chairman asked Mr Hume whether SDLP's case was that the country required partnership in government involving all parties. Even if SDLP were in a majority with UPNI and Alliance they would still regard UUUC participation as essential. Mr Hume agreed that this was so. Mr Devlin pressed impatiently for the adjournment.
9. During the adjournment Chairman, Dr Oliver and Dr Hayes saw SDLP. Mr Fitt said they had been very anxious to talk but useless to do so in face of Mr West's refusal to negotiate. Chairman said a refusal to negotiate need not be interpreted as a refusal to discuss the objections to participation etc. SDLP should probe UUUC to get this on the record. Mr Currie said the record favoured SDLP up to the moment. Chairman agreed and said the record might be better after cross-examination. He had some questions to ask himself, MNH urged SDLP to continue in view of the trouble likely to arise from the Stagg death. He said SDLP were in a tactically stronger position if they came back and asked for the talks to be tied to par 24, forcing UUUC to publicly justify their position and leaving SDLP as the party waiting at the table whenever UUUC was prepared to talk on the matters referred.
10. After a half hour adjournment, the meeting resumed. In a short statement, Mr Hume said Mr West had made it clear that UUUC had ruled out discussion Convention. Dr Paisley said they wanted to meet each party again once, but agreed they had already seen enough of UUP and UPNI and would see Alliance again on Friday which would probably suffice. Vanguard had cancelled an arrangement to meet UUUC.

under paragraph 24. SDLP had always been ready for such a discussion and were ready to talk again when UUUC had made up their mind to accept the directions of paragraph 24.

11. At this stage Mr Devlin left the meeting, followed quickly by the other three SDLP representatives.
12. Dr Paisley began to make a statement for the record, but the Chairman ruled that since the meeting was no longer inter-party in character the meeting was closed and nothing could be added to the record. Dr Paisley contested this and UUUC retired while Chairman considered the position.
13. Chairman conferred with Dr O and Dr H. When UUUC returned, Chairman ruled that the inter-party meeting had ended when SDLP retired. He sympathised with UUUC's desire to get their rejoinder on the record. He was prepared to assist them to have their views recorded, but not on the record of the meeting. He would invite Messrs West, Baird and Paisley to make short statements which would be recorded verbatim by Hansard. He would let the leaders have copies of the transcript since this was not part of the record of the meeting. The record of the meeting would be available for inspection as usual, but copies would not be available.
14. Messrs West, Paisley and Baird then read statements into the record. Mr Paisley said he would debate again the question of publication. Chairman said he was free to do so in Convention.
15. Mr Baird asked for a ruling whether the discussion had been within the terms of paragraph 24 - SDLP had really challenged the Chair. Chairman said he would not give a ruling outside the meeting or outside the Convention.
16. Mr Baird said they wanted an early return to plenary sessions and were asking for an early Business Committee meeting. He also asked about the method of making a Report. Chairman explained the procedure and said the precise arrangements were a matter for Business Committee.
17. Dr Paisley said that they would not accept an invitation to talk to S of S while the Convention was still in being.
18. Mr West said UUUC still wanted to meet other parties. There seemed no point in again meeting SDLP, but SDLP should not be allowed to veto the whole Convention. Dr Paisley said they wanted to meet each party again once, but agreed they had already seen enough of NILP and UPNI and would see Alliance again on Friday which would probably suffice. Vanguard had cancelled an arrangement to meet UUUC.

19. The Chairman said he would talk to leaders and take advice. Dr Paisley said UUUC would not attend a leaders' meeting where they were under represented and out-numbered, but would see Chairman on their own at any time.

PRESENT

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| Mr West | Mr Deattie |
| Mr Hume | Mr Armstrong |
| Mr Currie | Mr H. Barth |
| Mr Boylin | Mr Allan |
| | Mr Wright |

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M N HAYES

13 February 1976

- The Chairman explained the procedure for verbatim recording. It was open to any member to ask to be recorded or not to be recorded. Record was called in at the request of Mr West and the remainder of the meeting was on the record.
- Mr West said they had come there to talk under three overriding conditions (a) no negotiation on an institutionalized Council of Ireland, (b) no negotiation on the proposition that any party should have a place in government as of right, and (c) the firm understanding that UUUC would not under any circumstances agree to serve in government with SLP. The Sinn Féin party could form a government if they had a majority.
- Mr West said the Convention Report should allay the fears of Unionists with the strong committee system and a Bill of Rights. There was also the PR system of voting.
- Mr Hume said SLP regarded the inter-party talks as an important means of reaching agreement on the form of government required by par 34 of the White Paper which would have support in both parts of the community. They regarded a hasty discussion as little better than a meeting of the whole Convention and not an ideal medium for negotiation.
- Mr Hume outlined SLP position - they believed that only a government representative of both traditions and drawing the support of all sections of the community could meet the needs of NI at the present time. Normally they disliked contrived solutions, but it was a complex situation they had to deal with. Until a normal political situation was reached, they believed only