



**BRITISH-IRISH
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY**

**COMHLACHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH
NA BREATAINE AGUS NA hÉIREANN**

TWENTY-THIRD PLENARY SESSION

3 and 4 December 2001

Dorchester Suite, Marriott Highcliff Hotel, Bournemouth

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

(Produced by FRANK CRANMER & JIM MULKERRINS, Clerks to the Body)

1. Monday 3 December 2001

The sitting was opened in public at 9.40 am in the Dorchester Suite, Marriott Highcliff Hotel, Bournemouth, with Mr David Winnick MP in the Chair.

The Chairman announced that, pursuant to Rule 2(a), **Mr Henry Bellingham MP, Mr Matt Brennan TD, Mr John Browne TD, Mr Tony Colman MP, Mr Jeff Ennis MP, Mr Michael German AM, Mr Brian Gibbons AM, Deputy Mike Torode, Mr Dominic Grieve MP, Senator Mary Henry, Mr Steven McCabe MP and Mr Michael McMahon MSP**, being Associate Members, had accepted the invitation of the Steering Committee to assume the powers and responsibilities of Members for all of the Session.

The Chairman noted that apologies for absence had been received from Ms Patricia Ferguson MSP and Mr John Hume MP MLA.

1. ADOPTION OF PROPOSED PROGRAMME OF BUSINESS

Ordered, That the proposed Programme of Business for the current Session, as amended, be approved.-(**Mr Michael O'Kennedy.**)

2. RECENT POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS

Motion made and Question proposed, That the Body reaffirms its support for the Good Friday Agreement and the conclusions of the Weston Park consultation; endorses the views of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the outstanding issues relate to policing, the stability of the institutions, security normalisation and decommissioning and that while each of these issues is best addressed in its own terms, rather than being seen as a precondition for progress on any other, the Agreement can only succeed if all parts of it are implemented together; notes the recent political developments in Northern Ireland; expresses the hope that the election of the Rt hon David Trimble as First Minister and of Mr Mark Durkan as Deputy First Minister marks the beginning of a new era of stability in the political institutions of Northern Ireland; and calls on all political representatives to respect the wishes of the people in the referenda to implement the Agreement in full. -(**Mr Jimmy Deenihan**);

The sitting was suspended at 10.45 am.

The sitting was resumed at 11.10 am, with Mr David Winnick in the Chair.

Mr Michael O'Kennedy took the Chair as Chairman.

Mr David Winnick resumed the Chair.

And the Question being put.

Resolved, That the Body reaffirms its support for the Good Friday Agreement and the conclusions of the Weston Park consultation; endorses the views of the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the Minister for Foreign Affairs that the outstanding issues relate to policing, the stability of the institutions, security normalisation and decommissioning and that while each of these issues is best addressed in its own terms, rather than being seen as a precondition for progress on any other, the Agreement can only succeed if all parts of it are implemented together; notes the recent political developments in Northern Ireland; expresses the hope that the election of the Rt hon David Trimble as First Minister and of Mr Mark Durkan as Deputy First Minister marks the beginning of a new era of stability in the political institutions of Northern Ireland; and calls on all political representatives to respect the wishes of the people in the referenda to implement the Agreement in full.

3. MESSAGE FROM THE PRIME MINISTER

The Chairman informed the Body that he had received a message from the Prime Minister on the occasion of the 23rd Plenary, as follows:

I am sorry that I am not able to address the BIIPB plenary Meeting in person. But I wanted to give my support to a Body that has done so much to deepen and strengthen relations between the Westminster and Dublin Parliaments since its first meeting 11 years ago.

There is a temptation to see British-Irish relations entirely through the lens of Northern Ireland. And it is perhaps the most obvious example of how joint working can move mountains.

Of course there is a great deal that goes on behind the scenes that doesn't make the headlines or arrest the world's attention. But which is every bit as crucial to relations throughout these isles and every bit as important to the lives of ordinary people on both sides of the Irish Sea: agriculture, transport, culture and the environment.

And there is more to British-Irish relations than Dublin and Westminster.

I am particularly pleased that, following the establishment of the new institutional structures under the Good Friday Agreement, you have now widened your membership to include representatives from the Assemblies of the devolved administrations and the Channel Islands and Isle of Man, which will enable the BIIPB to address the totality of relationships within these Islands.

Bertie Ahern and I have picked up where our predecessors left off widening and deepening relationships between and across the United Kingdom and Ireland. On 12 December 1997, in the margins of the European Council meeting in Luxembourg, we issued a joint statement calling for enhanced cooperation between Ireland and the UK, based on our unique relationship,

stemming from geographical proximity, shared history, and the resulting close intermingling of people and cultural influences. On 1 June 1998, in Dublin, the Taoiseach and I followed this up by announcing our wish to develop a more intensive bilateral relationship, based on a programme of closer working cooperation across the whole range of common business, including EU matters. I renewed this call in my speech to the two houses of the Oireachtas on 26 November 1998, when I called for a "dramatic new effort in bilateral relations". The Taoiseach and I committed ourselves to seeking a new dimension to the relationship, involving a real partnership between governments and peoples which would engage our societies at every level.

Your work has underpinned our joint endeavour, cementing links across the board, in every area where we share a mutual interest. Proving that we can work together but maintain our unique identities. That we can set aside our differences for the benefit of all the people of these islands. And that we can only truly protect and further our interest when we unite in partnership.

I wish you well for this year's meeting and for your continued success - bringing governments together; and bringing government closer to the people.

Tony Blair

The sitting was suspended at 1 pm.

The sitting was resumed at 2.45 pm, with Mr David Winnick in the Chair

4. THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PARADES

Resolved, That the Body takes note of the responses of the British and Irish Governments to the Report of Environmental and Social Committee [Doc. No. 82] on the Cultural Significance of Parades and the conclusions and recommendations of the Report.-(**Ms Marian McGennis.**)

5. ADDRESS BY MR QUENTIN DAVIES MP, SHADOW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

At the invitation of the Steering Committee pursuant to Rule 2(c), Mr Quentin Davies MP, Shadow Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, addressed the Plenary.

The sitting was suspended at 4.20 pm.

The sitting was resumed at 5.10 pm, with Mr David Winnick in the Chair

6. STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, RT. HON. DR JOHN REID PC MP

A Statement was made by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt. Hon. Dr John Reid PC MP

7. QUESTIONS FOR ORAL ANSWER

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Rt. Hon. Dr John Reid PC MP, replied to Questions for oral answer put by Members of the Body.

The sitting was adjourned at 6.10 pm till tomorrow.

2. Tuesday 4 December 2001

The sitting was opened in public at 10.05 am in the Dorchester Suite, Marriott Highcliff Hotel, Bournemouth, with Mr David Winnick MP in the Chair.

1. BUSINESS REPORTS FROM COMMITTEE CHAIRMEN

Mr Michael Mates MP, Vice-Chairman of Committee A, made a statement about the work of the Committee.

Sir Brian Mawhinney PC MP, Vice-Chairman of Committee B, made a statement about the work of the Committee.

Mr Séamus Kirk, Chairman of Committee C, made a statement about the work of the Committee.

Mr Conor Lenihan TD, representing Committee D, made a statement about the work of the Committee.

2. SUBSTANTIVE MOTION FOR THE ADJOURNMENT OF THE BODY

Motion made, and Question proposed, That the Body do now adjourn.-(**Mr Séamus Kirk**);

The sitting was suspended at 11 am.

The sitting was resumed at 11.20 am, with Mr David Winnick in the Chair.

Mr Michael O'Kennedy took the Chair as Chairman.

Mr David Winnick resumed the Chair.

And the Question being put.

Resolved, That the Body do now adjourn.-(**Mr Séamus Kirk.**)

The Session concluded at 12.25 pm.