Reward and Encouragement: 2 Words for the Decommissioning Debate
(A few thoughts from Barbara)

The aim of this paper is to address the differing approaches and understandings
that the parties are bringing to the decommissioning debate.

Bare in mind the view of George Mitchell, in his Independent Report on
Decommissioning (1996), that the most important form of decommissioning is of
'mind-sets'. It is important to suggest that this indicates that decommissioning is
not just about weapons, and therefore it is not simply something that involves
parties who have links with paramilitaries. Parties without such links have been
keen to draw a distinction between themselves ('we have no weapons to
decommission') and those who appear to be able to 'deliver' on the subject of
illegal weapons. In other words, a distinction is being drawn between having a
role and not having a role based purely on the issue of access to weapons.

In listening to the parties talking about this issue it is clear that one of the
difficulties they have is in understanding what each is saying. The confusion can
be seen in relation to the difference between 'Reward' and 'Encouragement'. So,
whilst each party (Ulster Unionist and Sinn Fein) has made overtures to the
other, there does not appear to be a clear method of unlocking these gestures to
move on. I suggest that a principal reason for this is the confusion between
reward and encouragement and I will now set this out.

The Ulster Unionists, in their gestures, have talked in terms of 'reward'; in other
words they will reward decommissioning by Sinn Fein with a lifting of the veto
currently being exercised in relation to setting up the Executive. They do not
understand how such a gesture can be left 'on the shelf' by Sinn Fein, after all it
suggests reciprocity, good will, implementing the agreement etc.

On the other hand, what Sinn Fein 'wants' is not reward but 'encouragement',
and this is much more than a pedantic dispute. 'Reward' suggests
disengagement and non-involvement, something that happens after an initial
gesture and therefore is not an intrinsic part of the gesture itself. Sinn Fein wants
'encouragement'. This is a very different process; encouragement becomes part
of the decommissioning process and this fundamentally involves, and implicates,
the Ulster Unionists in decommissioning in a way that is far more active than the
'separateness' of reward.

'Choreography', which is much talked about requires the *active* involvement of
the two sides. Add to this, George Mitchell's view that decommissioning is
fundamentally about 'mind-sets', and you have a formula which dictates the need
for the Ulster Unionists to play a more active role. This role requires talking
about (and acting accordingly in relation to) 'encouragement' (which indicates
their role in decommissioning - as suggested by Mitchell) rather than reward
(which symbolises disengagement and the absence of a role).

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Bare in mind the view of George Mitchell, in his Independent Report on Decommissioning (1996), that the most important form of decommissioning is of 'mind-sets'. It is important to suggest that this indicates that decommissioning is not just about weapons, and therefore it is not simply something that involves parties who have links with paramilitaries. Parties without such links have been keen to draw a distinction between themselves ('we have no weapons to decommission') and those who appear to be able to 'deliver' on the subject of illegal weapons. In other words, a distinction is being drawn between having a role and not having a role based purely on the issue of access to weapons.

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'Choreography', which is much talked about requires the *active* involvement of the two sides. Add to this, George Mitchell's view that decommissioning is fundamentally about 'mind-sets', and you have a formula which dictates the need for the Ulster Unionists to play a more active role. This role requires talking about (and acting accordingly in relation to) 'encouragement' (which indicates *their* role in decommissioning - as suggested by Mitchell) rather than reward (which symbolises disengagement and the absence of a role).