

SINN FEIN/SDLP.

Attached two SDLP papers received on 13.6.88.

Paper 1.SDLP - Sinn Fein 13 June 1988.

Paper 2.SDLP Comments on Sinn fein "Proposals"

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SDLF - Sinn Fein 13 June 1988

1. Comments on Sinn Fein Document, 2 May 1988, Pages 8 and 9

Introduction

From our discussions it has emerged that while we are both agreed that the Irish people have the right to self-determination, there is a major difference between us on how necessary it is to obtain the agreement of Unionists if there is to be unity in Ireland.

On the second matter it appears to us that in keeping with many people Sinn Fein confuses two vetoes exercised by Unionists..

The Unionists have a natural veto since they live on this island and since their agreement is essential if unity is to be achieved.

The Unionists have also, historically, had a veto on British policy towards Ireland, a veto to which they had no right whatsoever. That veto was exercised in that British policy denied Irish unity. Up until now successive British governments have been pro-union. Now, however, they are neutral in that they are saying, without taking a position themselves, that Irish unity is a matter for those who want it persuading those who do not.

There is, therefore, nothing to stop British governments becoming

pro-Irish unity in their policies. Our task is to persuade them to go in that direction and to use all their considerable influence and resources to persuade the Unionist people that their best interests are served by a new Ireland; a new Ireland in which Unionist interests are accommodated to their own satisfaction and in which there is a new relationship with Britain.

These are the goals of SDLP policy. They are goals which we believe can only be achieved by political means and which have to be achieved by political means if the outcome is to be a stable and peaceful Ireland. It goes without saying that if a new Ireland is to be built politically, it should be as painless as possible for the people who have suffered so much. It must also involve the progressive breaking down of all barriers which have grown up between people in post-partition Ireland.

#### SDLP Proposals

To the ends outlined above we would make the following proposals to any party interested in achieving these same ends:

1. Concerted political action, nationally and internationally, to persuade the British government to adopt, as a matter of policy, a commitment to and action towards progressively breaking down the barriers between both parts of Ireland that have developed since partition and to using all its influence and resources to persuade the Unionist people that their best interest lies in a new Ireland which accommodates their interests to their satisfaction and which has a new relationship with Britain.

2. Concerted action to persuade the Unionist people to join together with us in building a new Ireland.

3. In the interim concerted political effort, nationally and internationally, to alleviate the social and economic problems which affect all our people.

### Conclusion

We wish to reiterate the very strong view that is central to all our discussions with you, that the right to self-determination and the exercise of self-determination depend on reaching agreement between the people of this island as to how self-determination is to be achieved.

It must be clear that such agreement cannot be achieved by force. In stating that we are simply restating what was said by Tone, two centuries ago, when he was quite explicit in stating that the way to achieve the right to self-determination of the Irish people was to unite Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter. The same sentiments were repeated a century later in Belfast by Parnell when he said that "Ireland can never be united and can never have its freedom until the prejudices of the Protestant people are conciliated".

Are we at last ready to take up the challenge thrown down by both men and which have never really been taken up by the leadership of nationalist-republican Ireland ?



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## SDLP Comments on Sinn Fein "Proposals"

### Introduction

The SDLP has no objection and indeed would be willing to work with Sinn Fein or any other party to develop a strategy towards the achievement of agreed common objectives. We would make it clear however that we would be working together on exactly the same terms - using democratic and peaceful methods and without any links or associations with any paramilitary organisations or with support or approval for such activity.

### The "Proposals"

1. [The SDLP view is that the Irish people do have the right to self-determination.] The problem is that the Irish people are divided as to how that right should be exercised. The real search for peace, justice and stability in Ireland is the search for such agreement. In the SDLP view this has always been the case and has never been faced up to in any serious way by nationalists or republicans in Ireland. This is the real challenge facing all of us. It cannot be pursued by "armed struggle".

2. This question underlines a consistent weakness in the nationalist/republican approach. The tendency to get hung up on abstract principles such as whether or not the British have a legitimate right to be in Ireland. The Irish will always argue that

they haven't, the British will always argue that they have, and both arguments will be based on different historical perspectives. The endless argument simply leads to a reinforcing of each position and no progress on the real problem. It is much better to deal with the factual reality than to have endless debate about ideological rectitude.

The real question is how do we end the British presence in Ireland in a manner which leaves behind a stable and peaceful Ireland ?

Answer Unite the people of Ireland first. What in fact we should all be discussing is how we achieve that objective and how we can persuade Britain to assist us in achieving that objective.

3. The SDLP view is that while the IRA may be politically motivated, no legitimacy can be conferred on its actions. To do so would concede the right of the majority of the Irish people to determine the means by which agreement in Ireland can be pursued to an unrepresentative and non-elected, non-accountable paramilitary organisation.

4. The SDLP view is that violence only produces further violence. The most effective response to violence in N. Ireland is non-violence, despite the temptation to do otherwise.

Condemning the violence perpetrated by British forces cannot excuse paramilitary violence as a legitimate response. Both are counter-productive and create barriers to achieving political progress.



The speediest way to end the military and armed police presence on the streets, together with all the consequences of that presence which weigh so heavy on the already disadvantaged people represented by SDLP and Sinn Fein is the political way. If the British Government states that the reason for that presence on the streets and consequent activity is the IRA campaign, then remove the stated justification by ending the campaign. In the event of that campaign ending the SDLP will cooperate to the full with Sinn Fein in ensuring that the people in all areas are relieved of the pressure of the military and armed police presence. We have little doubt that in such circumstances that object could be achieved very quickly. As to the political presence our own view on that is contained in our original document and in our answer to 3 and is indeed central to our whole political strategy and analysis.

Does anyone doubt that the people who are suffering most from what Sinn Fein calls the "war" in Northern Ireland are the people of Nationalist areas. ~~Are~~ there not grounds for ending that war by using the exact same reasons as Padraig Mac Piarais and his comrades in the GPO in 1916 when they laid down their arms lest they bring ~~more~~ suffering on their people ?

5. The SDLP has never argued for a purely internal settlement. The only people who do so are those who advocate an independent Northern Ireland. The SDLP has repeatedly made clear that relationships between Ireland and Britain as well as relationships within Ireland need to be resolved satisfactorily if there is to be lasting peace and stability.

6. This proposal is answered in the first paragraph.

7. The SDLP is prepared to enter into meaningful discussions with any political party which receives a popular mandate and which use democratic and peaceful methods, with a view to working for agreement in Ireland. To this end the SDLP would also join with such parties to seek such international support as would be appropriate.