

DOORSTEP - MICHAEL ANCRAM  
CASTLE BUILDINGS - 27 JANUARY 1997

MICHAEL ANCRAM

Good morning everybody, I'm going to have to be fairly brief because as you know the Plenary begins at 12 o'clock and I will have to be there, but I wanted to come out and just say a few words to you. Obviously we meet in Plenary at a difficult time amid a rising tide of IRA violence and it is one of the challenges of this Talks process to show that we will not be diverted from our democratic process by acts of violence which are being perpetrated to try and achieve political purposes, and I will be saying in the Plenary that the British Government will never be diverted from its course by acts of violence of this sort and we will continue to pursue those who perpetrate acts of violence in pursuit of political purposes with all the resources available to us. We are going back now to resume our discussions on the difficult question of decommissioning. I believe that if the will is there among the parties, as I hope it is, that we can find a way through this particular problem, not today but over these next few days, and it certainly will be the British Government's intention to try and explore with the parties the way of getting through this very important issue of decommissioning to allow us to move on to the other parts of the agenda, such as setting the agenda for substantive negotiations.



MEDIA

Isn't there a rising tide of Loyalist violence as well?

MICHAEL ANCRAM

We've seen acts of violence which, as we understand, have been perpetrated I think in the words of the Chief Constable, by Loyalist extremists. Last week we made a statement ourselves saying that we would be looking very closely at what is happening. We know that the rules here provide for those who believe that the Mitchell principles have been demonstrably dishonoured to make a formal representation which will then be looked at within this process to decide whether action should be taken against any parties against whom such accusations are laid. We said we would look at the situation on the ground, we would evaluate it, we will continue to evaluate it, and we obviously want to hear what other parties have to say.

MEDIA

Minister, you are a participant, do you believe that the perpetrators of those bombs have demonstrably dishonoured this process?

MICHAEL ANCRAM

What we have to evaluate is whether the participants here, or any of them, have demonstrably dishonoured the principles, the six Mitchell principles to which they signed up at the beginning of this process. I do not believe that to be the case but obviously I will want to hear what other parties have to say this



morning. We said as a Government last week we are looking at what is happening on the ground, we will continue to evaluate that position, there can be no double standards. Those who are here must be here on the basis that they are all honouring the commitments that they made.

**MEDIA**

You are going to face a direct challenge from the United Kingdom Unionists and the DUP and they are going to say, Minister you are in possession of all the security and intelligence gathering material, were these Loyalist attacks or not? What is your response going to be?

**MICHAEL ANCRAM**

My response is going to be as it was last week that the test we have here as to whether parties participate in this democratic process, is whether they adhere to the principles they signed up to at the beginning of this process. That is what we need to evaluate, obviously we want to hear what other parties have to say, but the evaluation we have made is not going to lead us to make a formal representation.

**EAMON MALLEY**

Well Minister, aren't you saying in essence or less, unless you can prove that Gary McMichael or David Ervine or Billy Hutchinson or somebody was physically involved in an act, then they can sit in here until the cows come home? Or Sinn Fein people could do the very same. Isn't that what Dr Paisley's saying and isn't he quite right about that?



MICHAEL ANCRAM

No, Eamon you can go and look at the Rules of Procedure as can I..

EAMON MALLEY

I'm quoting your words.....

MICHAEL ANCRAM

You can also look at the principles to which we all signed up, which don't merely ask for demonstrations that positive acts have taken place but also require people to desist from doing certain things. Those are the principles upon which we have to make our evaluation and we will be doing so. I'm going to have to go because its 12 o'clock.

EAMON MALLEY

But are'nt you hiding behind something? Aren't you saying that as long as the people directly involved, participants in the Talks are not physically involved in any action, then whoever is out there can carry on. Isn't that what you're really saying in these circumstances?

MICHAEL ANCRAM

No I am not, and if you look at what the principles say, and I refer you to those principles, they are the principles to which we all signed up. We have to show not only that we renounce violence but that we try and prevent violence taking place. There are certain tests within those principles, those are the principles the evaluations have to be made upon and that is what we will be doing. I am sorry to break this short but I have to go in to the



Plenary, I think I will be the first person  
called upon to make a statement and I wouldn't  
want to miss that.