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SECRETARY OF STATE'S DOORSTEP AT CLOSE OF DAY ONE OF MULTI-PARTY
TALKS - 9 SEPTEMBER 1996

I thought it would be helpful if we just came out and gave an impression of the character of today. Obviously it has begun with a serious discussion of the way to deal with what was on any view a serious event. The threat by the CLMC and that has been very naturally treated seriously. The first point is that it has been treated in an orderly way and the reason for that is that we agreed Rules of Procedure before the end of July which have been operated, have been agreed to be operated, and that process now is in place. It is one that calls for fairness on both sides, a statement of the charge followed by an opportunity to answer it and all of that is proceeding. But of course that takes a little time and I am glad to say, secondly therefore, that this has not been a wasted day thereafter because a number of bilateral meetings have taken place which have been very useful, very positive in character. So that's the second thing which I believe to be positive and good and the third and last thing is that there is every reason to suppose that this positive trend will be continued tomorrow and thereafter.

It's not hardly the new momentum you had hoped for is it?

No it's not the new momentum that I had hoped for wholly because I would have hoped, of course, for an absence of any threat of violence such as the CLMC were responsible for, extremely regrettably and quite inexcusably in my opinion. On the other hand it could have been a day completely dominated by that with no positive use made of the time and its very far from that.

Sir Patrick if it turned out that the Loyalist parties were excluded from this process wouldn't it damage the whole talks process?

Of course, any exclusion of a democratically mandated party means that the process in consequence is handicapped and that is why both Governments have always said that they want to have on board all parties with a democratic mandate. But, of course, they have to be wholly signed up to the principles of democracy and non-violence and

in the case of Sinn Fein there has to have been an ending of violence, a restoration of the ceasefire by the Provisional IRA.

Could I just ask you Sir why has neither Government brought forward the necessary legislation in accordance with everything that went before on the question of decommissioning, why are you all dragging your feet on this?

I don't think that's the case at all. Both Governments are at an advanced stage in preparing the legislation that would be needed to enable decommissioning to take place without risk of criminal proceedings, frustrating people who want actually to fulfil their obligations to decommission. Both Governments are at an advanced stage and I think that that's reassuring, yes your absolutely right in saying its very important but there isn't any question of dragging the feet.

Will you have the necessary paperwork done, for example, for October if you want to get it on the statute books this year, before an election possibly?

Yes I can certainly say that draft legislation is at an advanced stage and it will of course be a matter for collective decision as to whether that is brought forward and it will be a matter thereafter for the different Parliaments, the respective Parliaments, to decide what form it should ultimately take if they wish to implement it.

Sir Patrick, the SDLP have intimated that they do not want the Loyalists to be excluded from the Talks which would mean that there would not be sufficient consensus for them to be excluded, will that have an impact on your judgement when you come to make your decision with the Irish Government as to whether the Loyalists should stay or should go?

I think its important that neither Government anticipates its decision because its under the Rules of Procedure, its a

quasi-judicial function that we have and I therefore think it's important not to anticipate what that decision will be.

The two Loyalist parties have submitted their defence paper to the delegations, have you seen that paper, and were you impressed by it?

No I haven't seen it yet. But we shall look forward to that and they have undertaken to do it at least by 10.00 am tomorrow morning and then it will be necessary for all the participants to consider it then.

Sir Patrick do you think that they can subscribe to the Mitchell principles short of this word 'condemned'?

I think its important not to anticipate what the reaction will be to whatever defence if you like, they will have put forward. I would much rather not do that. At the end of the day the decisions will have to be taken as to what is appropriate action in the light of the defence and in the light as the Rules of Procedure say of the views of the participating parties.

Do you think the dialogue between the SDLP and the UUP has the potential to lift the Talks out of real difficulties and push them forward towards the launch of the three-stranded negotiations?

Yes I do think it's very important that bilaterals should be taking place, discussions should be taking place, between the SDLP and the UUP, I think that's important. I believe its important that all parties should be getting a clear idea of each others' position because that is the only basis upon which there can be an accommodation that will take us forward.

Sir Patrick why did you mis-calculate so badly, you were bearing your soul over the weekend. I read your speech very carefully and you seemed to be admitting that you mis-calculated in terms of what exactly the feelings are of the community and as a result possibly misinformed yourself coming up to the marching season etc, how did you get that so badly wrong if you are admitting to it?

Well I think that the views of people and the extent to which they give expression to those views and act upon those views is never a precise matter to calculate in advance. If you say to me well why did I say over the weekend that I do not look upon the scene as one of success for the Secretary of State in this regard it is because it is self-evidently true and therefore I think I might just as well admit it. But that's the reason, it is never easy to calculate precisely these matters and, as I said in my speech at Oxford, the scale and the degree and the bitterness of the response was something that took me by surprise.

Was your thesis not somewhat flawed though when you lumped the behaviour as you seem to suggest of both communities together in terms of confronting violently etc the Rule of Law, because where were the constitutional businessmen within the Catholic Nationalist community on the streets violating or challenging to the Rule of Law?

Well I think it's important not to dwell now.

But you said it Sir, I want to hear what you have to say

Yes well thank you, it's a great encouragement for me to say well I know I've got something wrong to be pilloried in this way in consequence. I think that we don't want to dwell in detail upon the events of the summer, recognising as we all of us must, that they were dire, very grave and have resulted in very grave wounds and it will take a long time to heal. The fact of the matter is that there was very grave disorder and violence both before and after the second decision taken by the Chief Constable and what we all of us have got to do now is to concentrate upon means of ensuring that the divisions which gave rise to that are both narrowed and made more shallow and ultimately done away with. And I believe that today we have taken, are taking sensible and positive and hopeful steps in that way. Thank you very much.

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