

DAVID ERVINE (PUP) DOORSTEPPED AT RE-START OF MULTI-PARTY TALKS - 9  
SEPTEMBER 1996

If there will be a move today to have you excluded from the talks  
what's your reaction?

Well of course we would disagree with any move to exclude us from the talks because we are committed to the Mitchell principles, have been and will continue to be so.

But you still refuse to condemn the death threats made by the CLMC

Well the circumstances of our role is the maintenance of a ceasefire, the attempt to create the demise of sectarianism, the democratisation of this society and if this society wants me to condemn and then lose the ability to achieve those aims then of course I will condemn but of course I think that it is best that we maintain the path that we have been on, a path that has seen life saved and a path that still gives hope. The atmosphere in Northern Ireland is terribly polluted and of course we all know that. But what kind of society are we when we see this atmosphere so terribly polluted that the circumstances are so grave and so polarised that people are alive. Is this society actually saying that it prefers a better atmosphere when people are dying because the suggestion is that there was a better atmosphere when people were dying. The only opportunity for hope lies in these talks. We have a commitment to the talks, we have a commitment to the Mitchell principles and we have a commitment to peace within our society. I can't make it any clearer than that and I am not going to utter words that are suggested we should utter by people who have no humility.

You sound very angry about this

If the question was asked in humility I think that we would look at it in a different way but I am afraid the issue in relation to the threat that was made had absolutely nothing to do with politics, we say that to you loudly and clearly therefore it is a military issue and



we have absolutely no control over or had no control over the threat that was made. You will have noticed in the media there have been suggestions from leading Progressive Unionist Party figures of an attempt to mediate. Now let us see where we can go but the glare of publicity I think has gone on long enough.

You sound very angry about this, are you angry with what the DUP are doing?

No I am not angry about this, I am angry that our society is falling apart at the seams, burning almost and the media are concentrating on what is a side show.

Billy Hutchinson, do you feel that the people who are calling on your party to condemn this particular threat are trying to box you into a corner whereby you have no room for manoeuvre to influence those people who issued the threat?

Well there are people who want us out of the talks and those are the people who are calling for this but what I would have to say is that this is side issue, what we are here today to do is as David has already said to try and get these talks to work. If it wasn't this threat it would be decommissioning and what I want to say to people is that I am going to go in here and I am going to be opposed by Unionists who are going to tell me that the UVF should decommission their weapons and they'll tell us that and then they will stand on platforms and they will shout and cheer about interference from Dublin and about United Ireland and everything else and they want the Loyalists to denude their community by actually giving away their weapons, that will not happen and we will ensure that. So people should remember that if they don't get us on this threat they will get us on decommissioning and that's what this is about. These are the people who claim that they are Loyalists but they want weapons handed over before this is solved.

It is my contention that there is a requirement for the participants here to have clarification of circumstances. On that basis we will

ask for the first bilateral meeting that we have ever had during these talks with the Democratic Unionist Party this morning when we enter. I hope that that can clarify the circumstances assuming that they meet us.

What do you reckon is main gameplan of the Unionists, why do they want to push you out?

Well I frankly feel that there are many issues, it is multi-faceted. I fear that the difficulty that besets us which is a military difficulty beyond our direct control is a side show but there are those who are attempting to use it to their own benefit. I rather fear that if we are the fringe party why are these people so worried about us.

David you yourself mentioned mediation in your first reply are you therefore hopeful that something might come of mediation?

Well we will have to take it very slowly and very calmly, it would rather depend on whether the mediator was acceptable to both sides. We haven't yet had a reply for that and gentlemen and ladies we are late and I must cut this short.