

## UUP/HMG

**Bi-Lateral 19/11/96 - 11.40am**

**Present : Reg Empey, Peter Weir, Peter King, David Kerr  
Michael Ancram, Quentin Thomas, David Hill**

MA- Could you tell us how you got on with the SDLP. We are looking to see how we can move forward on the issues that there are disagreement on. We spoke yesterday of the problems with the Irish Government.

RE - We will pursue any types of meetings with the SDLP. However the reality at the moment is that you want the inclusion of Sinn Fein in the process. We do not believe there is any picture emerging which would put us in a position where we could sit down with them. Can you imagine us sitting with Sinn Fein with the present activities on the ground ?

MA - If there is a ceasefire, can we ever say it will be exclusive and complete?

RE - Well, Paddy says he can't fetter his discretion on the entry requirements regarding a new ceasefire. He envisaged some sort of 6 month timeframe barring them at earlier meetings with us if they didn't accept his terms. We can't accept them on the basis of a phoney ceasefire. The credibility gap is too wide.

MA - Is there any likelihood you will ever sit down with Sinn Fein ?

RE - Well at the moment it is not likely they will declare a satisfactory ceasefire.

QT - Obviously both Governments would like Sinn Fein to be involved. However, leaving aside our views, it's conceivable that we won't get co-operation from the Irish or the SDLP if they feel we set groundrules to exclude Sinn Fein.

RE - We do see the irony of the situation with people inside the process unable to do business because of the activities of people outside the process.

MA - Points to the three elements the SOS will be looking for from Sinn Fein

1. An unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire
2. Words and actions consistent with the restoration of a ceasefire  
e.g. using surveillance to determine existence of targeting, weapon development and recruitment.
3. There must also be sufficient time taken to assess these.

RE - Would you not agree that abiding by democratic principles takes time ?

MA - The SOS will have the responsibility of determining how much time is required for an assessment to be made.

RE - Can I say that there is a consistent thread here in that ourselves, the SDLP and you always have to rescue the Talks. And can I say this, we are not going to ride to the rescue on this one.

QT - Well you can't ride to the rescue while you ask for prior decommissioning.

RE - Well set in its context, can you imagine a meeting between the UUP and Sinn Fein at present ? It would have colossal implications for our Party. They would portray it as a victory for Republicanism in that they have forced us to the negotiating table.

MA - We have got to have terms however that our firm and reasonable. You have gone through a number of things which you have identified as required for a permanent ceasefire.

PW - There are two things we need,  
1. the mechanisms for decommissioning  
& 2. the entry requirements for Sinn Fein.

You also speak of needing sufficient consensus to get agreement on entry requirements. You say that the SDLP and the Irish government would be unhappy with our requirements. Perhaps you should remember that there won't be any unionists there either if we're not happy.

QT - Asks about decommissioning requirements in our paper.

RE - Well, we need the mechanisms and legislation in place, with provision made for agreement for benchmarked deposits to be reached by the Independent Commission.

QT - Would this schedule have to be worked out before or after the Strands begin ?

MA - Advising on regulations for what needs to happen and other mechanisms, these are all to be looked at by the Commission?

PW - Yes. We feel our paper sets out perfectly reasonable requirements for people to enter the democratic process.

MA - We are trying to see if we can find a way through this. We want to find where there are bridgeable gaps.

RE - Well we have said that on the mechanisms of decommissioning, agreement can be reached.

MA - Between you and the SDLP ? - or us set up something you can buy and we can then try to sell to the SDLP and the Irish. We are not showing our present proposals to the SDLP.



DH - Would your requirements for agreement and commitment to Mitchell and the demonstration of a permanent ceasefire still mean that Sinn Fein could be in the plenary but not in the substantive talks ?

RE - You are trying to bring us to a even point with these people. You must realise that in light of their recent behaviour any attempt to do this by you creates enormous difficulties for us. The reason we have this impasse is because of the massive credibility gap that these guys have.

MA - If you come back from your meeting where the SDLP where they have accepted a 'tranche' from SF/IRA then great. But our judgement is that this won't do. We are trying to create a proposition on the Commission and the terms of reference etc.

DH - We would see your demands as being addressed and debated in plenary once a ceasefire is called.

MA - The Irish feel that here the Unionists are asking for more and more all the time from Sinn Fein. He points out that ourselves the SDLP, the Irish and HMG are the main players.

RE - There is potential for agreement between us and the SDLP on the technical roles for the Commission and the Committee. However aside from this agreement, I cannot see what we will negotiate with Sinn Fein that we won't negotiate with the SDLP.

MA - Asks for a meeting tomorrow.