

# NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM

## EXTRACTS FROM A SPEECH BY JEFFREY DONALDSON FORUM REPRESENTATIVE FOR LAGAN VALLEY SPEAKING AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE NEWTOWNARDS ULSTER UNIONIST BRANCH MONDAY 11TH NOVEMBER 1996

The next few weeks may well bring further IRA violence to Northern Ireland and the mainland as republicans continue to put pressure on the Government to make the political concessions which they require in order to call another tactical ceasefire. It seems that IRA units have been tasked to select targets which will ensure maximum political impact and which they hope will force John Major to meet their demands.

The IRA are demanding the immediate inclusion of Sinn Fein in the multi party talks at Stormont in the event of a further ceasefire and without any decommissioning of their weapons before or during the talks. They also want a time-frame of six months for the talks to reach a conclusion and they are demanding that the Government implement a series of what they call confidence building measures including the release of prisoners and reform of the RUC.

Judging by their statements this week both the Irish Government and the SDLP appear to support these republican demands and Messrs Dick Spring and John Hume have been very active in applying their own pressure on John Major to move in their direction. How quickly these people forget the atrocities that have been committed by the IRA. In their pursuit of political advantage the Pan Nationalist Front care little for the views or the feelings of the long suffering people of Northern Ireland.

Ulster Unionists will resist these attempts to smuggle Sinn Fein into the talks by the back door or to accord to republicans a democratic status which they do not deserve. The IRA must not be allowed to bomb their way to the negotiating table and so we have proposed a number of key principles which must be applied to the entry of Sinn Fein to the talks. These include :

1. There must be a complete and permanent end to violence by the IRA.
  2. The present discussions on decommissioning must be completed and the appropriate mechanisms established to handle decommissioning before substantive negotiations begin. There can be no fourth strand on decommissioning.
  3. There must be a handing over of a significant amount of guns and semtex before Sinn Fein can be admitted to the talks.
- The decommissioning process must be independent of the negotiations. There can be no bartering of guns in return for political concessions.

We believe that these requirements are entirely reasonable and consistent with establishing the commitment of Sinn Fein/IRA to the democratic process. The message must go out to the IRA that they cannot proceed on the basis of the armalite in one hand and the ballot box in the other. They must choose between the path of democracy or the path of violence but they cannot be allowed to walk on both.

The Government must be firm on this issue. They are supposed to be the guardians of democracy in this United Kingdom. They must not allow the IRA to corrupt the democratic process. If they fail to stand up to the threat of terrorism and allow the weasel words of Mr Spring to persuade them to concede to the republican demands then Ulster Unionists must vote in Parliament to bring this Government down. If they give in to the IRA then they will have acted against the best interests of the United Kingdom as a whole and of Northern Ireland in particular and they will no longer be worthy to govern. It will be time for them to go.