

Labour Coalition

36 Victoria Square, Belfast
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7/10/97

FAO; All talks delegations

Attached is a copy of a press release dealing with the issue of Labour's representation in the Forum and the talks.

At issue here is the democratic right of every party to choose its representatives.

Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey do not represent the Labour Coalition - they are not even members. It will be clear to all parties that they have no back up or support. Even those who stayed with them when this issue first came up have now come round to support their removal.

The Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey "party" consists of themselves. They are making use of the expenses including party money, with no structure whatsoever to regulate how this money is used.

This is an intolerable situation which continues only because it is permitted by the Secretary of State. We are asking other parties to intercede with the Secretary of State to put this right.

The fact that Labour is the smallest party should not permit this to be brushed under the carpet. The principle that the parties, not the Secretary of State, choose their spokespersons, must be sacrosanct.



C Gates
Chairperson



L Simpson
Secretary

Labour Coalition

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Press Release

Members of the Labour Coalition have come to Castle Buildings today to demand our rightful place at the talks table.

Labour, which won tenth place in the Forum elections, has been excluded because Secretary of State Mo Mowlam refuses to make up her mind on the simple matter of a change of representation.

The facts are:

Following the Forum election we selected two people from our Regional List, Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey, to be our delegates.

During the first six months of the talks our Steering Committee and membership became gravely concerned at the lack of accountability, on political, but also on financial matters, of these two delegates.

On 2/2/97 our Steering committee took a decision to replace them and requested the Secretary of State to put this into effect.

This was backed by a majority of our candidates. To date some 60 of the 72 candidates have expressed no confidence in Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey and supported us in replacing them.

Subsequent meetings of our Steering Committee have reaffirmed the decision. A Conference of our entire membership held on 26/4/97 unanimously backed the decision.

Shortly after the 1996 election we decided to open up an individual membership. This was supported by Hugh Casey and Malachi Curran. Despite a number of requests and reminders neither has joined the Coalition. So we have the absurd situation that Labour is "represented" in the talks by two people who are not even members.

All the original components of the Labour Coalition have withdrawn support from Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey.

There is no justification whatsoever for the fact that these two individuals remain in the talks process. They have no back up. They do not even have people to fill the places on the various talks and Forum sub committees.

Press Release

They remain, not to promote the policies on which we fought the election, but as a cynical exercise to prevent Labour taking its seats and putting these views forward.

The real scandal of this situation is that Mo Mowlam is upholding this situation by refusing to take a decision on who Labour's representatives should be.

Last week Sinn Fein's presence in the talks was challenged. Mo Mowlam was able to reach a decision on that challenge within 24 hours. Yet eight months after Labour decided to change its delegates Mo Mowlam cannot make up her mind!

Sir Patrick Mayhew, when in office, replied to our correspondence and set deadlines for the resolution of the matter. Mo Mowlam issues only acknowledgements of correspondence. Three requests for a meeting to discuss the matter have been answered with acknowledgements.

Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey remain in position courtesy only of the Secretary of State.

It is impossible not to suspect that this arrangement suits because these two individuals have made no independent proposals on anything since the talks began. They have gone along with the government on everything. They are, in effect, two votes in the bag.

The Labour Coalition, on the other hand, is committed to fighting in the talks for the socialist ideas on which we fought the election.

Mo Mowlam cannot decide in favour of Malachi Curran and Hugh Casey because the total injustice of such a decision would provide clear grounds for a legal challenge.

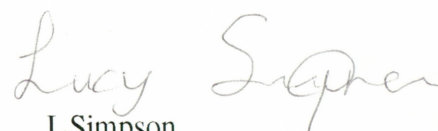
So she keeps them there by not taking any decision.

On Monday at the Labour Party Conference in Brighton Mo Mowlam said, "If there is one thing I have learnt from five months in government, it's that if you don't act, it (the issue) falls off the edge of the agenda."

This is obviously what she hopes will happen in the case of the Labour Coalition.

The Labour Coalition are going to lobby the other parties, to picket the talks and do whatever else is necessary to establish the democratic right of a party to choose its own spokespersons.


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