

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE

UUP TALKS BULLETIN

26 September 1997

Ulster Unionist Reaction to HMG's Judgement of our Indictment against Sinn Fein/IRA

The UUP believes HMG's decision to be wrong. While we welcome the words in their statement that the "Republican" movement as a whole must honour the Mitchell principles - including any group with a clear link to Sinn Fein/IRA - the wording in the paragraph is weak. Mitchell Principle (a) imposes a requirement to oppose the use or threat of force by others. The Prime Minister was much clearer and stronger in his Newsletter article of 13 September and the Secretary of State will be held to that higher standard.

The An Phoblacht article clearly demonstrated that Sinn Fein/IRA were not committed to the Mitchell Principles. The government have repeatedly acknowledged that both groups are 'inextricably linked'. Furthermore, for the British and Irish Governments to attempt to divorce responsibility for the Markethill bombing away from Sinn Fein/IRA is ludicrous; particularly after the Prime Minister specifically said that if the Mitchell principles '*are dishonoured...by the IRA or front organisations for it, let there be no doubt that Sinn Fein will not be able to stay in the negotiations.*'

Is the Secretary of State asking the people of Markethill to believe that Continuity IRA can plant a bomb in South Armagh without the sanction of the Provisional IRA? How much violence do the people of Northern Ireland have to endure from the IRA and front organisations for it, before this Government takes action against them and expels them from the table of democracy?

The Ulster Unionist Party will not allow this government to deal with the IRA behind the backs of the pro-Union people of Northern Ireland. We will remain in the Talks to defend the Union from the scourge of the IRA and our Government's inexcusable duplicity.

Main points from agreement to launch three strands.

The document agreed to by all the Parties except Sinn Fein/IRA which has allowed the commencement of substantive Talks commits those who remain in the Talks to a number of key principles.

The agreed procedural motion guarantees that consent will be the guiding principle within negotiations. Unionism asked for and received written assurances from the Prime Minister on the issue of consent. On decommissioning, participants representing terrorist organisations are now bound by the Mitchell solution which calls for decommissioning alongside the negotiations.

Sinn Fein/IRA did not sign up to the procedural motion section on consent and decommissioning. What must be realised by all Ulster Unionists is that this has been

the first test for Sinn Fein/IRA at the table of democracy. They have rejected the basic principles which everyone else, including the loyalists, have accepted. At the first obstacle in the Talks, we have split the pan-nationalist front and isolated the IRA, showing them up for the fascists they really are.

As David Trimble said to the press afterwards, "The very first decision to be taken, the very first vote to be held, we found all the Parties on one side and Sinn Fein alone on the other side. The views set out by the Prime Minister and the Irish PM on consent are clear and straight forward - that consent is the guiding principle for the negotiations and for determining the outcome of the negotiations...so Sinn Fein have taken the first faltering steps towards acceptance of partition. We are satisfied that we have achieved what could be achieved at this stage."

Ulster Unionists do not have to negotiate with Sinn Fein/IRA.

We do not have to obtain the agreement of the IRA.

Why?

It's very simple. Under the rules of the procedure Sinn Fein/IRA's agreement is not required to establish sufficient consensus to pass any motion within the Talks.

The rule of sufficient consensus is derived from the principle of consent. It states that for anything to be agreed within the Talks, it must have the support of a Party or Parties representing the majority of nationalists and unionists. The figures are taken from the Forum Election results, in which the SDLP achieved over 50% of the nationalist vote and the UUP achieved 46% of the Unionist vote. Therefore to get sufficient consensus for the Unionist community, we need the support of one of the smaller Loyalist parties. Crucially however, the agreement of Sinn Fein is not required. This point is lost on all journalists who have been caught up in the hysteria which has surrounded the arrival of Sinn Fein at Stormont. Equally, agreement on decommissioning has proved more difficult because of the DUP's absence.

Be aware, we have entered into a Talks process which embrace those who have a mischievous agenda of spinning rumours, half truths and lies. Aside from the predictable rhetoric which will come from the usual sources within Unionism, more unnerving may be the lies spun by Sinn Fein. As Unionists we know the IRA and we know their reliance on lies and empty rhetoric to keep their grassroots on-side.

The Ulster Unionist Talks team will do all it can to keep the Party informed and up to speed on events as they happen in the negotiations.

We have not entered Stormont to appease anyone. Our Government has invited the IRA to the table of democracy to discuss the future of Northern Ireland. We are not going to stand idly by whilst they undermine the Union. We are not afraid of confrontation and we have not run away from the challenge. The only outcome acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland will be one which maintains Northern Ireland's position within the UK.