

# Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)

## *TALKS BULLETIN (9th-11th September 1996)*

The Talks process this week was dominated by the question as to whether or not the PUP and UDP were in breach of the Mitchell Principles on account of the CLMC's death threat against Billy Wright and Alex Kerr. All participants are bound to adhere to the Mitchell Principles in order to qualify for admission to the Talks. The DUP presented a 'Notice of Indictment' and the method of dealing with the matter was agreed collectively.

On Tuesday three hours were spent in plenary while the indictment and the defence were discussed. The PUP and UDP presented a robust defence of themselves in a paper and in their answers to the charges put by the other delegations. They reaffirmed their commitment to the Mitchell Principles and their opposition to "the use or threat of violence from whatever source". In our own contribution, we noted the acknowledged relationship between the parties and the CLMC and stated that we hoped the PUP and UDP would make explicit what was implicit in their paper, namely their opposition to the threats in question. We noted that it could be argued that the CLMC threats were not a breach of the text of the Principles in that they were not intended to influence the outcome of the negotiations. However, the threats do contravene the spirit of the Principles and it would be wrong to turn a blind eye to threats of violence. We received some satisfaction in the verbal responses by the UDP and PUP. The British and Irish Governments ruled that the PUP and UDP were not in breach of the Principles and, therefore, proposed no further action. We have managed to secure two hours on Monday to discuss the Governments' reasoning.

The UUP has been conducting bilateral meetings all week with the SDLP, HMG, the DUP and other interested parties with a view to securing a speedy resolution to the question of how decommissioning will be dealt with and the agendas for the three strands of discussion. We are reasonably confident of progress here and note some much-needed readiness on the part of the SDLP to treat the Talks seriously rather than aim for a deal over the heads of the unionist parties. It is to be hoped that this will continue.

Progress has been severely impeded, however, by the Alliance Party's insistence that the UUP and DUP be indicted for alleged breaches of the Mitchell Principles at Drumcree. The Alliance have come in for a great deal of scorn for their actions, not only from the unionist parties, but from the SDLP as well. The consequence is that the whole of next week will be spent discussing this non-issue. A very full discussion of Drumcree was conducted in late July in plenary: John Alderdice was on holiday, however! The Women's Coalition are also threatening to indict the UUP for some innocent remarks by delegation member John Hunter to the effect that the unionist people have it within their power to bring Northern Ireland to a halt. This charge will be treated with the same contempt as that by the Alliance Party. It is very disappointing that some tiny parties see fit to indulge in political posturing which will inevitably lead to the Talks being stalled further.

## *FORUM BULLETIN (13th September 1996)*

Today the Forum conducted a very useful debate about the serious beef crisis affecting Northern Ireland. The majority of the contributions came from the Ulster Unionist Party, demonstrating yet again that it is the true friend of farmers and rural communities. The Labour party did not contribute to the debate and those speeches given by the Women's Coalition and the PUP and UDP were poor. However, the debate did give a real focus to this issue and the Forum Committee on Agriculture will be making the BSE crisis a priority. The Agriculture Committee is currently seeking submissions on this issue. They should be sent directly to the Committee at the Interpoint Building.

It was encouraging that the Women's Coalition did at least attend the Forum. It is essential that as many parties as possible are attending, especially now that the Forum is dealing with bread and butter issues of real concern to the wider community. Are we to assume from the SDLP's boycott that nationalist cows are BSE-free and that only unionist cows are affected?

13 September 1996