



2 February 1996

Pat Doherty comments on report of Forum for Peace and Reconciliation

Speaking following today's meeting of the Drafting Committee of the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation Sinn Féin Vice President Pat Doherty said:

"We believe that today's report contains much that is positive and progressive. It is that agreement which we wish to emphasise. Sinn Féin however could not agree to the overall document because of our reservations in those areas which specify the measuring of the outcome of negotiations and in the proscription of the expression of national self-determination.

"In our view these fundamental issues, viz the means of reaching an agreed outcome of all-party talks and the exercise of the principle of self determination are matters more properly for discussion at all party negotiations.

"Sinn Féin firmly believes that so long as the unionists in the Six Counties are assured a veto over change, then there is neither reason nor incentive for them to move towards an accommodation with the rest of the Irish people.

"Sinn Féin's position on the issue of consent is clear and democratic. We have consistently argued that the consent and allegiance of all is needed to secure a peace settlement. A lasting peace requires that unionist consent, agreement and allegiance to new political structures is gained. In the same way the gaining of nationalist consent, agreement and allegiance to new political structures is required if we are to have a lasting peace. This clearly requires an end to all vetos, to all preconditions and to any attempt to pre-determine the outcome of negotiations.

"The strength of the Forum has been that throughout the peace process it has been a constant focus when it seemed that nothing else was happening, especially in the absence of any move towards all party negotiations. It is highly significant that it has arrived at huge areas of agreement on very many issues. The work of the Forum should continue. The fact that there has been such a degree of consensus in this report shows what a vital role the Forum has in the peace process."
