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DOORSTEP - TUESDAY 24 JUNE 1997DAVID TRIMBLE

With regard to the issue of decommissioning, those proposals are, as we understand it, based upon the report of the Mitchell Commission which suggested parallel decommissioning - that was decommissioning would take place alongside talks. That wasn't our first preference but in fact, actually, when Mitchell did make this report we implicated that we could go along with decommissioning taking place alongside talks provided of course that that is what actually happens. And so our concern in discussions with Government in recent days and again today is to ensure that the procedures and the mechanisms are clearly there to ensure that such decommissioning takes place. Now, as you know, the Prime Minister is planning to make a statement to the House tomorrow in which he will spell out his proposals and at that time of course the scheme released with the Government's proposals will become available. But of course they are merely proposals, and we will then have to study them and consider them and it may be that the discussion will develop from that point.

Q: David, does that mean to say that you could move away from the demand that there must be a product up front if, if you like of some decommissioning...?

David Trimble: Parallel decommissioning or decommissioning alongside talks means it takes place alongside talks not before, not after, but alongside. And you couldn't, you wouldn't be having parallel decommissioning if the talks were running and running for any significant period of time without the parallel decommissioning because that wouldn't be parallel. So parallel decommissioning does imply that actual decommissioning with the phrases I used ?? up front is there, if not simultaneously at the beginning of the talks then very, very closely linked thereto. And of course we would want to ensure from our own point of view that this was actually going to happen and it wasn't just a matter of people accepting a lot of verbiage and obfuscation.

Q: You don't therefore require a tranche of weapons up front before Sinn Fein get into talks?

David Trimble: Well that that had been our position prior to the publication of Mitchell and when Mitchell was published we looked at that; not our first option but it is something provided that there are the assurances that it is going to happen in practice and that it will occur in the course of the talks and of course that the whole process of decommissioning is also parallel to the talks process.



Q: Mr Trimble what would you require to see from the IRA if not decommissioning before you would be prepared to sit down with a representative of Sinn Féin?

David Trimble: We have to be sure that there will be actual decommissioning during the talks and that we have to have the procedures and the mechanisms in place which will ensure that that happens. Now a lot of this gets into quite a degree of technicality and there is a lot of technicality in the Mitchell report and there is a degree of technicality in the proposals that the Government may be bringing forward. These are the matters that we have to look at quite carefully. We have not ourselves seen the paper that the Government intends to publish. We will of course, when we see it, look at it very closely.

Q: Taking forth what you are saying then, if you are happy that actual decommissioning is going to take place, do you see yourselves moving into substantive talks now?

David Trimble: Well I think ... the first thing we have got to do is to get this paper and then we are going have to study it and to look at it. I don't want to be drawn too far in terms of hypotheticals because we do have to, I am sorry to have to mention this, but we do have to look at this whole process against a background where I am quite satisfied that there has been bad faith on the part of the Irish Government. I recall the time when John and Ken and myself went down on the 11 March last year and were assured by the Irish Government that the necessary mechanisms would be in place even before the beginning of the talks in June of last year and here we are, we are in June of this year, 12 months after the time they promised the mechanisms would be there, and they still haven't occurred. When you put that together with the behaviour of John Bruton last night, it may be that he was just trying to snatch a little bit of glory before his term ended, but I think what he said last night was calculated to make the process more difficult. And when we look against the background of that degree of bad faith on the part of certain persons then we are going to have to be cautious and that is why I don't want to speculate too far.

Q: What would you ask the Irish Government to do now?

David Trimble: To carry out the undertakings that they gave to us on the 11 March last year.

Q: What are the procedures and mechanisms that you would like to be placed?



David Trimble: Well the crucial one of course is to have the International Verification Commission up and running and that has to be up and running well before the process. Now we have finally got the legislation through but there now needs to be the necessary agreement between the British and Irish Governments to get the International Verification Commission in place and to get it working. Because it just can't wait for the substantive talks to be set up because then that puts back far too far the question of when any actual decommissioning is going to take place. So we have got to have procedures there that actually bite, and I must say I am satisfied that on discussing the need for that that there has been a meeting of minds.

Q: Do you think that what you have told us today implies or should imply that you are giving consent through Mr Blair's approaches?

David Trimble: No, we have not yet seen the paper, I have outlined to you our general approach to this matter. We have got to look very carefully at the details. Now if you will excuse me I think we will move on.