

DOORSTEP: DAVID TRIMBLE, DAVID ERVINE & GARY McMICHAEL ARRIVING AT  
CASTLE BUILDINGS, STORMONT, ON 17 SEPTEMBER 1997

Mr Trimble

Last Saturday the Executive of the Ulster Unionist Council was determined that the Unionist voice should be heard in the Talks. The Ulster Unionist Party has at no time left the Talks. The Secretary of State's invitation to Sinn Fein, however, after a premature judgement that the ceasefire was genuine, gave rise to a number of difficulties, some of which have been addressed in discussions with Government over the summer. As a result the British and Irish Governments have declared consent to be the guiding principle governing the conduct of the Talks and the outcome of them, and actual decommissioning to take place during Talks. The results in some other matters under discussion are set out in a separate briefing note to you and some issues are still unresolved. We have no illusions about the character of Sinn Fein. We have not invited them to the table, but we are not afraid of them and we're not going to run away. We are not here to negotiate with Sinn Fein but to confront them and to expose their Fascist character. Sinn Fein's support is not actually necessary for any agreement within these Talks. And Sinn Fein's presence is a challenge to the SDLP and the Irish Government, will they side with the undemocratic demand that a united Ireland be imposed upon the people of Northern Ireland against their will or will they work with us to build a better future for all the people of Northern Ireland and a new broader based agreement that would reflect

the totality of relations within the British Isles. We are not prepared to tolerate Sinn Fein being portrayed as the party of peace and Unionists as the problem. The truth is that it is the Unionists, all the Unionists, who are the genuine democrats, but if we are outside the process the danger is that that truth will not be recognised. This is why the IRA have tried, last Thursday and again yesterday, to provoke a Unionist walk-out, but we will not allow Unionism to be marginalised. Those that do walk out leave the Union undefended, they surrender the defence of the Union to the tender mercies of the British and Irish Governments. Those who have run away have no alternative to offer and they try to cover this up by attacking those who continue to defend the Union. The Ulster Unionist Party will ensure that the Union is defended. We will ensure, as we have done this summer, that attempts to dilute the consent principle will be defeated. I think it is the clear duty of all Unionists to support us in this. Support us in defending the Union and defending the civil rights of all the people of Northern Ireland. We would like their help and that help can still be given, but we will do the job alone if that is necessary and we welcome the support that we have here today. With Ulster Unionists at the table there will be no united Ireland, there will be no joint sovereignty, no joint authority, actual or disguised, the Anglo-Irish diktat and the illegal territorial claim will be under constant attack. There will be no agreement coming out of these Talks which is not clearly a United Kingdom solution and we firmly believe that it is only



within the Union that the rights and the identities of everybody in Northern Ireland can be recognised and protected. The Ulster Unionist Party will also make sure that those who have not renounced violence and who have not accepted the democratic process are under constant pressure. After the repudiation of the Mitchell principles in Sinn Fein's newspaper last Thursday, and after yesterday's bomb Sinn Fein's presence at these Talks must be challenged. Our entry here today makes sure that will happen whereas the DUP challenge on Monday was not heard because they were not present, they were not there to make it. Similarly we will be pressing for declaration by the Plenary of support for the so called Mitchell compromise, mainly that there should be actual decommissioning of paramilitary arms during Talks. I wish the DUP would be here with us supporting that call, and voting for it if necessary. We shall also be pressing the Government and the Independent Commission to make sure that such actual implementation of the Mitchell compromise does take place and the Talks will return to that in future plenaries if necessary. Now as to what we are going to do here this morning, we will go and see the Chairmen to make sure that the complaint will be addressed about Sinn Fein's presence is on the agenda. We shall also consult with the British Government and we may have a bilateral with the SDLP if time permits. That at the moment is all that we intend to do here today, although of course we will respond to developments should they occur.

Media

Mr Trimble what's your concept, if you say the guiding principle is consent, what is your definition of consent?

Mr Trimble

Consent covers a range of things. It covers the basic constitutional position of Northern Ireland, that Northern Ireland shall not cease to be part of the United Kingdom by the consent of the majority of people in it. But it also governs these Talks in that there will be no outcome of these Talks unless by the process of sufficient consensus the parties to the Talks agree and that consequently embodies the clear Unionist requirement, the requirement that Unionists actually support the outcome. But it also governs the way in which the Talks are conducted and it is quite clear and the British Government understands this that there will be no further attempts by Governments or others to drive the process forward by dictating to parties what they do within the talks, that is quite clearly understood.

Media

From the word go.

Mr Trimble

From now, from here on. That is what is meant by consent governing the Talks, the outcome of the Talks, so that consent is going to apply in all its aspects.

Media

David Trimble you say in your statement that with Ulster Unionists at the table there will be no united Ireland, therefore will you soon be at the table even though Sinn Fein are there?



Mr Trimble

We shall decide on our tactics. We are going to make sure that the Union is defended. We are not going to surrender the defence of the Union and we are not scared of what opposition we meet, we know that we are capable of meeting any opposition, and righting it we will.

Media

Mr Trimble could I put it to you, the DUP and the UK Unionists are not in this process because of the agreement between the two Governments on decommissioning, where do you stand against the back-drop of your Forum election fight - no guns, no Talks?

Mr Trimble

Well I will deal with what I actually said, not your representation of it, and what I have said. What we have said we are going to ensure happens here today or Monday or Tuesday, or whenever it does happen, that there will be a formal commitment by Plenary to actual decommissioning. Now we would welcome the support of the DUP to ensure that that happens, and we would welcome the support of all to ensure that that happens.

Media

Do you now accept that you must be in Plenary to prosecute, must you be in Plenary to prosecute?

Mr Trimble

We don't take that view, we don't take that view but we are here to speak to the Chairmen to make sure that that matter is heard, it is of course a matter of decision for the Secretary of State who I feel must now be regretting the eagerness with which she

declared the ceasefire to be genuine when we have had one major bomb which is clearly a Republican bomb and the prospect of 2 to 3 more bombs following them because we have reason to believe that that will be the case.

Media

At some point you will be around the table. When that happens what will be your approach?

Mr Trimble

We will decide our tactics, you will find out what we are going to do when we do it, I don't think it's good tactics to announce these matters in advance. There's one other matter which I should have drawn your attention to which I am just going to mention before handing over to David and that is that there is appended to the press release which you all should have received, a list of 11 points on which there have been significant developments by Government since July, developments which have occurred solely as a result of the pressure of the Ulster Unionist Party.

Mr Ervine

I intend to be very brief because frankly I think that in the defence of the Union, the language should be inside rather than outside. We feel in the Progressive Unionist Party that we have broken lots of ground so that others can walk on it, we are now trying to achieve something better for our children. We intend to do that and in being brief I say merely let the debate begin, we are ready for it.

Mr McMichael

I have a very short prepared statement. Today represents a new stage in Northern Ireland's history



with the potential to move the political process into a new dimension. The Ulster Democratic Party is firmly committed to bringing a peaceful future to the people of Northern Ireland and a democratic settlement in the context of a stronger union. While important outstanding issues have yet to be satisfactorily addressed the Ulster Democratic Party will pursue a speedy resolution of these matters so that the three-stranded negotiations can proceed. Negotiation promises to be challenging to all parties but the greatest challenge will be faced by Republicans who must learn to conform to the democratic parameters of this process. The requirement to achieve the consent of the people of Northern Ireland, which is a fundamental principle upon which these Talks are based, ensures that an outcome other than a continued union with Great Britain is inconceivable. Republicans must come to terms with the realities of this process and the rest of us must join together in the search for a democratic settlement and the creation of a fair society for the Northern Ireland people.

**Media**

Gary McMichael will you be at the Talks table today with Sinn Fein?

**Mr McMichael**

There are outstanding issues which have to be resolved. We want to see a speedy resolution of these matters so that substantive negotiations can proceed. What is significant and what should be noted at this time, is that while we have some Unionist parties who have failed to stand up to their obligations and their

responsibilities in this process, the three remaining Unionist parties are going in together to fight together against Republicans, against those who cannot come to terms with the reality of a democratic settlement and our objective is to bring a truly peaceful society to the people of Northern Ireland.

**Media**

Is there a difference between your position and the Ulster Unionists. You have referred on at least 3 occasions as to substantive negotiations and going in to negotiate. Unionists are going in to confront there is a difference in approach there, will you talk to Sinn Fein?

**Mr Michael**

Well what I would say is that this process doesn't work unless there is commonality between the Unionist parties, particularly because of the mathematical implications of how the Talks are now constituted with the absence of others, and in that respect it is important that we work together to ensure that the outstanding issues are overcome and that we can move the process forward.