

PRESS CONFERENCE - ROBERT McCARTNEY, UKUP
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ROBERT McCARTNEY

Has everyone got a copy of the United Kingdom Unionists' submission on decommissioning? You will be aware of course that there is a rule of confidentiality but that rule does not apply to party documents stating any party's own position in relation to any issue. It does preclude them of course from revealing anyone else's statements provided those statements are not already in the public domain. Let me say that this lengthy document deals with all aspects of the decommissioning issue but there are one or two that I would like to emphasise. First of all the object of this document on decommissioning is not directed at excluding anyone, Sinn Fein or anyone else, what it is directed to is stating clearly the terms the democrats ought to impose for discussion with other democrats. If you support violence as a means of obtaining political objectives you are by definition not a democrat and if you wish to debate or negotiate or arrive at a settlement with democrats then you have to adopt democratic procedures and show that you clearly abandon violence. As far as the United Kingdom Unionist Party is concerned it requires a permanent and complete cessation of violence, a declaration which will not only in the use of the term "complete" show the nature of the ceasefire but by the use of the term "permanent" will describe its duration. What this party is alarmed about is the prospect that the British and Irish Governments may accept as a passport into

these negotiations some lesser declaration, some inferior ceasefire, some cobbled-up and fudged definition of a ceasefire in order that they can arrange or find out from Sinn Fein what the lowest price is for the cessation of Sinn Fein violence and then attempt to either persuade cajole or coerce the pro-Union community into acquiescing in the payment of Sinn Fein's price. Let me make it quite clear that I was elected on a manifesto which said that there will be no place amongst democrats for those who condone violence or retain the means of inflicting it upon others, that was the manifesto of my party and I also made it perfectly clear that at no time would the Union be the subject of any negotiation. Any analysis of this document will show that to attempt, for the Governments to attempt for the SDLP to attempt or for the Alliance Party to attempt to reply upon the Mitchell Report as opposed to the Mitchell Principles as a basis for decommissioning would amount to nothing more than a political fraud upon the people of Northern Ireland. When Mitchell reported in January of this year he stated that he was satisfied of the good intention of the paramilitaries to implement a system of verifiable decommissioning. At the time that report was published it is now known that far from that being a true statement Sinn Fein/IRA were already and had laid in position all the logistical requirements for a series of outrages of a terrorist kind on the United Kingdom mainland and subsequently in Northern Ireland which not only cost lives but billions of pounds worth of damage.

Therefore it is quite clear that that report was based on either misconceived and erroneous data or else the makers of that report were guilty of very serious errors of judgment. There can be no longer any basis for relying upon that report as a foundation for a decommissioning process. But there is one other very important point about that report. That report took as evidence of Sinn Fein/IRA good faith the fact and the main fact that the ceasefire had been in being for over a year. It was upon that fact that they based their assumption of the good intentions of the paramilitaries, now of course that foundation since Canary Wharf, since Osnabrook, since Manchester, since Thiepval, since the murder of Garda Maccabe at Adare, since the bombing in the Strand, all have been proved to be completely wrong. There is now no basis upon which the Mitchell Report can be relied upon. It's also clear that the principles in paragraphs 34 and 35 of the Mitchell Report are also fatally flawed. These worked upon the basis that the Unionists were demanding decommissioning prior to talks, Sinn Fein/IRA were saying there can be no decommissioning until after the talks when a settlement that we can endorse has been arrived at, and what Mitchell attempted to do was to say if you come to some point in the middle and agreed a decommissioning during the talks that seems a reasonable compromise that people should consider, that reasoning of course is totally flawed because the parties weren't starting off from an equal distance. The pro-Union parties were never ever resorting to violence

of any kind and were never ever relying upon anything else but democratic argument inside democratic procedures. On the other hand Sinn Fein/IRA were coming from a position where they were committing murder and mayhem and destruction for political objectives and what they were now being told in paragraphs 34 and 35 was simply this, if you agree to decommission bit by bit as you are afforded political concessions towards your objectives wouldn't that be a good idea? That is the very thing that democrats object to and which none of the pro-Union parties will countenance: guns and semtex being decommissioned on the basis of political concessions offered by the pro-Union parties. There is now emerging a clear unity of interest among all the pro-Union parties. First of all none of the 3 pro-Union parties, the Ulster Unionists, the DUP or the UK Unionists will agree to any sub-committee on decommissioning, they will not agree to a sub-committee which would effectively create a forth strand and would shunt the decommissioning issue off a parallel track and into a siding where it would be buried while the political discussions including Sinn Fein went on. Secondly they will not accept in any shape or form a decommissioning formula which is based on political concessions in exchange for modest decommissioning of guns and semtex, that is the position. The United Kingdom Unionists have therefore set out in the conclusions to their report this party's requirements for principles for decommissioning. There are 4 to be undertaken by any party said to front a

paramilitary organisation. One - there must be a declaration by all parties fronting/associating with or sharing the political objectives of a paramilitary organisation for themselves and for such organisation of a cessation of violence that is complete, complete in that it encompasses violence of any kind against anyone including punishment beatings, intimidation and coercion as well as shooting and bombing and it must be a ceasefire which is permanent in its duration. Secondly any such declaration must be accompanied by the handing over a credible quantity of weapons and explosives as a demonstration of the makers good faith that the cessation of violence is both complete and permanent. We cannot have a return to a ceasefire which is neither complete nor permanent but which is merely a temporary tactical short term tactic that enables Sinn Fein/IRA to play cat and mouse with the parties of democracy. Thirdly there must be a declaration that the relevant party both for itself and the organisation which it is said to front subscribes to the Mitchell 6 Principles and fourthly an acceptance by the relevant party if the democratic process of negotiations can in no way related to or made dependent upon any process of decommissioning and that decommissioning will progress to its completion whether or not a political agreement acceptable to that party or its related organisation is achieved. There can be no question of negotiations being made dependent upon a drip-feed decommissioning. Nor can there be any question of total decommissioning being made dependent upon an

overall settlement which Sinn Fein/IRA would endorse. And finally the Governments must have 2 requirements, they must declare, (1) that the acceptance of Sinn Fein's entry into the talks at any stage must be preceded by the declaration of a complete and permanent ceasefire, I for my party can see no reason why they shouldn't make this requirement of a ceasefire be both permanent and complete since both Governments either claimed or assumed that the August 1994 ceasefire was both complete and permanent. You will recall the then Taoiseach Mr Albert Reynolds and Mr John Hume and Mr Gerry Adams standing on the steps of the Mansion House and Mr Reynolds and Mr Adams saying this is permanent, complete means permanent indeed John Hume absolutely savaged a sky television interviewer who had the temerity to suggest that complete may not be the same as permanent. So we can see no objection that they should not now require in 1996 a ceasefire of the type which they not only required but stated had been achieved in August 1994. Secondly there must be an acceptance by both Governments that Sinn Fein's entry into the substantive three strand negotiations will not take place until both Governments have enacted all enabling legislation and passed all necessary regulations for the practical processing of decommissioning. We believe that broadly speaking these requirements now meet the demands of all 3 pro-Union parties. There may be minor differences but essentially all 3 parties require a permanent and complete ceasefire. All 3 parties require the handing

over of a significant amount of guns and explosives prior to Sinn Fein being admitted to substantive negotiations and thirdly all 3 parties are determined that the decommissioning issue will not be shunted into a sub-committee or fourth strand but will have to be properly addressed and the principles determined before these talks proceed further. Thank you very much.

MEDIA

What's the significance of the timing yesterday of this document was something happening

ROBERT MCCARTNEY

Yes, it is the issue of the day, decommissioning is now the issue being presently discussed and debated and has been for the last 2 weeks in the talks and I had made an earlier detailed oral presentation but there was a requirement that the party should put in a written presentation and what I've handed out now is the written presentation which includes all the matters that we detailed orally 2 weeks ago.

MEDIA

Do you think there's anything happening in the background to suggest Sinn Fein are being sucked in

ROBERT MCCARTNEY

Well I think that the fact that both Governments despite all the events from Canary Wharf right up to Thiepval have kept open their contacts with Sinn Fein/IRA indicates that it is a prime consideration for both Governments and the SDLP that Sinn Fein despite the diabolical outrages over the past 9 months should still be brought into

these proceedings. That means that those efforts will include a watering down or weakening of the requirements of a ceasefire and that we have going on is a total reluctance on the part indeed a refusal on the part of the British Government to use the word permanent. John Major in I believe May of this year in the presence of Mr Roach and Mr Wilson told me in an non-confidential interview that the British Government would not require the use of the word permanent because the IRA simply would not accept it. He also said that if they signed up for the Mitchell Principles the Mitchell Principles would in some way convert any form of ceasefire into a permanent ceasefire, that of course is absolute nonsense and I told him so, so you're quite right, I do fear and the pro-Union parties generally fear that there is an attempt at the moment to fudge the terms as to the nature of the ceasefire that would be acceptable to the 2 Governments for the invitation of Sinn Fein to enter these talks. That is very much the case and let me say that I confirm what Reg Empey said the day before yesterday in an interview, he was asked for his comment upon the denials of the Secretary of State and he said 2 things - we all know that in the Autumn of 1993 shortly before the Downing Street declaration Sir Patrick Mayhew was vehemently denying that there were any contacts, talks, negotiations of any kind with the IRA, we now know as a matter of subsequent history that that was just absolutely untrue. Reg Empey was able to point out that at a time during the Brooke Mayhew talks when they were looking for a

democratic way out when Sinn Fein weren't even in the picture the British Government was leaking documents directly to Sinn Fein. Mr Empey said that so the answer to your question is yes we do believe and are anxious about the contacts that are going on apparently via Mr Hume which we believe will be trying to find an acceptable formula or fudge for ceasefire arrangements that would permit Sinn Fein into these talks.

Any other questions.

Thank you all very much indeed.