



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

DECOMMISSIONING OF ARMS DURING ALL-PARTY TALKS.

Statement by John D TAYLOR, Deputy Leader of the UUP.

30 7 1996

Arising from yesterday's debate at the STORMONT TALKS it must be underlined that no one is asking the Loyalist Paramilitaries to commence decommissioning unilaterally.

Every democrat accepts that it is desirable that all illegal arms are removed from the political debate. Likewise most people recognise that Unionists cannot negotiate with IRA/SINN FEIN under threat of the use of illegal arms.

Accordingly efforts must be made to reduce illegal arms - be they loyalist or republican.

Those who have subscribed to the MITCHELL REPORT, and they include both the Southern Irish Government and the SDLP, are expected to accept Mitchell's Recommendation in paragraph 34 of his report that 'PARTIES SHOULD CONSIDER AN APPROACH UNDER WHICH SOME DECOMMISSIONING WOULD TAKE PLACE DURING THE PROCESS OF ALL-PARTY TALKS'. Regrettably yesterday both the SDLP and Southern Irish Government reneged on that recommendation!

Ulster Unionists are not demanding de-commissioning by Loyalist Paramilitaries on an unilateral basis. WE EMPHASISE THAT THERE CANNOT BE ANY PARTIAL DECOMMISSIONING BY LOYALIST PARAMILITARIES UNLESS THERE IS SIMILAR DECOMMISSIONING AT THE SAME TIME BY REPUBLICAN PARAMILITARIES.

Mitchell, in paragraph 35 of his report states 'As progress is made on political issues, even modest mutual steps on decommissioning could help'

So, to summarise, Unionists are not asking for any decommissioning by Loyalist Paramilitaries whilst Sinn Fein/IRA are not at the talks. Should Sinn Fein arrive at the talks - and that would depend upon many factors including an IRA Ceasefire, then Unionists are simply asking for equal decommissioning, or mutual partial decommissioning, by both Loyalist and Republican Paramilitaries - not total decommissioning by either or both sides!

BUT SINCE OBVIOUSLY THE SOUTHERN IRISH GOVERNMENT IS MANIPULATING THINGS TO ARRANGE THE ENTRY OF SINN FEIN/IRA INTO THE ALL-PARTY TALKS IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT THE MODALITIES FOR MUTUAL AND PARTIAL DECOMMISSIONING ARE AGREED IN ADVANCE AND IN PLACE. THAT IS ALL THAT ULSTER UNIONISTS SEEK AT THIS TIME.