

7. An even more worrying variant of your proposal we heard was that the Chairman of the proposed Commission would "make the call" on when decommissioning could take place.
8. That would be totally different from the role envisaged in the Mitchell Report. It would look like reverting to a peremptory approach. We would not agree to vest such a fundamental political role in a military specialist, or indeed in anyone other than the negotiators themselves.
9. We see the implementation of all aspects of the Mitchell Report, and the creation of the enabling political progress in the Talks, as the key to decommissioning.
10. We would not wish to encourage unionists to feel that decommissioning can be achieved without efforts on their part to build the necessary political confidence, and worry they might use your proposal to avoid their responsibilities in that respect.

Points for Lord Alderdice on Alliance Proposal

1. We remain most anxious to overcome the decommissioning hurdle, having expended enormous energy on this, from the appointment of the Mitchell Body onwards.
2. When the Mitchell Report proved insufficient we agreed to an electoral process and Forum. When still more was needed we prepared draft legislation, and stand ready to put it through.
3. I understand you are proposing that we must set up the Verification Commission as of now, and see this as a means of disentangling decommissioning from the political agenda.
4. We fervently want both political progress and decommissioning, but we see realistically that decommissioning can only be achieved through an inclusive process. Much as we might like a peremptory approach, we realise we won't get decommissioning unless we persuade the people with the guns to do it voluntarily.
5. We would need to be very sure your approach was genuinely an exit strategy, that is part of a realistic scenario to enable unionists to get down to the three strands without using the predictable inability of the Commission to produce guns up-front as a further stalling device.
6. In the absence of such reassurance, we worry the proposal could be a trap - whereby the unionists would ratchet us further still into "Washington 3" territory, and, far from decoupling, make the political process till more hostage to unrealistic demands on decommissioning.

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