

# **Dermot Nally Papers**

**UCDA P254/98**

# An internal Northern settlement is not a solution, party says

The following is the text of the three motions adopted at yesterday's Sinn Féin conference.

## MOTION 1

That Sinn Féin recommit itself to our objectives as contained in our constitution. In summary, these are the establishment of a democratic, socialist republic based on the Proclamation of 1916.

## Advancing the Irish Peace Initiative

That Sinn Féin believes that the next phase of our peace strategy should be based on advancing the Irish Peace Initiative. The basic principles of this initiative are:

- That the Irish people as a whole have the right to national self-determination.
- That the exercise of national self-determination is a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland.
- That both governments should commit themselves, in consultation with all other parties, to a process to achieve this, within an agreed timeframe.

- That an internal, Six-County settlement is not a solution.
- That the consent and allegiance of unionists are essential ingredients of a lasting peace to be established.

- That the unionists cannot have a veto over British policy or over the peace process in Ireland.

- That the British government must join the persuaders.

- That the London and Dublin governments have a major responsibility to secure political progress.

We recognise the delicate stage the peace process has now reached. We restate our commitment to building the conditions for demilitarisation as part of the search for a lasting peace settlement.

Sinn Féin commits itself to

building a sustainable Irish republican-nationalist platform of political demands, with popular support in Ireland and internationally, particularly in the USA and EU, based on the dynamic contained in the Irish Peace Initiative.

## MOTION 2

### Assessing the Downing Street Declaration

That Sinn Féin recognises and welcomes the progress that has been made to date in the evolving peace process.

The Downing Street Declaration marks a further stage in the development of the peace process. The dialogue between Sinn Féin and SDLP leader John Hume was followed by the Irish Peace Initiative.

It was against the background that the Downing Street Declaration was constructed.

Since then, there have been a number of important developments.

- A consensus between nationalist in the Six Counties, supported by the Dublin government, emerged.

- The IRA was moved to say that this could be the basis for peace.

- The attention of both governments has been focused on this conflict in an unprecedented manner. It is at the top of their political agenda.

- The conflict has received unparalleled international attention.

- The core political issues necessary for the resolution of the conflict are at the top of the political agenda.

- A framework has been identified in the Irish Peace Initiative for a resolution of the conflict which involves both governments, in consultation with all the parties and with the support of the international community.

- There was protracted dialogue between Sinn Féin and the British government.

- The IRA temporarily suspended operations to encourage the development of the peace process.

- It is, therefore, in the context of the Irish Peace Initiative and of the principles and political dynamic contained within this initiative that we have carried out a detailed examination of the Downing Street Declaration to assess its contribution to the creation of the conditions for a sustainable peace.

### Progress and political implications

The Downing Street Declaration is not, nor do its authors claim it to be, a peace settlement and it clearly does not contain all of the elements which made up the Irish Peace Initiative. It does mark a further stage in the peace process.

The Downing Street Declaration also contains negative and contradictory elements. Some of these are:

- In asserting that it has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland" it must be noted that there is no mention of Britain's political interest, selfish or otherwise.

- In addition, Britain's constitutional guarantee to the union is at variance with its statement of disinterest.

- Having directly addressed the right of the people of the island of Ireland to self-determination, the free exercise of that right is qualified by the assertion in the same paragraph that the right must be exercised "by agreement between the two parts (of Ireland) respectively" — on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given.

- The clear recognition that present structures and policies have failed and implicitly, a recognition that change — political and constitutional — is necessary if a satisfactory and permanent settlement is to be achieved.

- The significance of the British government's decision on six occasions in Paragraph 4, as well as Paragraph 9, to define any permanent agreement in the context of the island of Ireland.

- The support expressed by both governments for "healing divisions" and their statement that this can only come about "through agreement" and "co-operation at all levels".

- The acknowledgement (Paragraph 1) that the Downing Street Declaration is not in itself a peace process but the "starting point of a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement".

- The positive role envisaged for Europe.

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

### Negative and contradictory elements

But the Downing Street Declaration also contains negative and contradictory elements. Some of these are:

- In asserting that it has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland" it must be noted that there is no mention of Britain's political interest, selfish or otherwise.

- In addition, Britain's constitutional guarantee to the union is at variance with its statement of disinterest.

- Having directly addressed the right of the people of the island of Ireland to self-determination, the free exercise of that right is qualified by the assertion in the same paragraph that the right must be exercised "by agreement between the two parts (of Ireland) respectively" — on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given.

- The clear recognition that present structures and policies have failed and implicitly, a recognition that change — political and constitutional — is necessary if a satisfactory and permanent settlement is to be achieved.

- The significance of the British government's decision on six occasions in Paragraph 4, as well as Paragraph 9, to define any permanent agreement in the context of the island of Ireland.

- The support expressed by both governments for "healing divisions" and their statement that this can only come about "through agreement" and "co-operation at all levels".

- The acknowledgement (Paragraph 1) that the Downing Street Declaration is not in itself a peace process but the "starting point of a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement".

- The positive role envisaged for Europe.

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

### Negative and contradictory elements

But the Downing Street Declaration also contains negative and contradictory elements. Some of these are:

- In asserting that it has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland" it must be noted that there is no mention of Britain's political interest, selfish or otherwise.

- In addition, Britain's constitutional guarantee to the union is at variance with its statement of disinterest.

- Having directly addressed the right of the people of the island of Ireland to self-determination, the free exercise of that right is qualified by the assertion in the same paragraph that the right must be exercised "by agreement between the two parts (of Ireland) respectively" — on the basis of consent freely and concurrently given.

- The clear recognition that present structures and policies have failed and implicitly, a recognition that change — political and constitutional — is necessary if a satisfactory and permanent settlement is to be achieved.

- The significance of the British government's decision on six occasions in Paragraph 4, as well as Paragraph 9, to define any permanent agreement in the context of the island of Ireland.

- The support expressed by both governments for "healing divisions" and their statement that this can only come about "through agreement" and "co-operation at all levels".

- The acknowledgement (Paragraph 1) that the Downing Street Declaration is not in itself a peace process but the "starting point of a peace process designed to culminate in a political settlement".

- The positive role envisaged for Europe.

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

- The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no self-interest or economic interest in Northern Ireland".

to national self-determination — this is a matter for the Irish people.

- Time and time again in the declaration, the veto is reiterated.

- The Downing Street Declaration is also replete with assurances to the unionists, which are nowhere matched by any recognition of the rights of nationalists.

- When questioned by Sinn Féin about the coercion of nationalists the British government said that the question "is based on assumptions which have no foundation in reality".

- The declaration contains an implicit commitment to amend Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. There is no matching reference by the British government to its constitutional claim as embodied in the Government of Ireland Act.

- The denial of nationalist rights is not addressed in the Downing Street Declaration.

- Nationalists are locked into the British state against their wishes — their consent was never sought. The right to give or withhold consent was not and is not extended to nationalists.

### Bridging the gap

We have identified these negative elements in the Downing Street Declaration in the hope that these difficulties can be overcome.

Sinn Féin is convinced that, despite the inadequacies of the declaration, the potential to build upon a real peace process still exists.

The necessary dynamic to move us all out of conflict must be found in the principles, framework, timescale, procedures and objectives of a peace process and particularly in negotiation.

Sinn Féin, therefore, commits itself to advancing the peace process and to creating the foundation for a lasting peace by building on the positive elements contained in the Downing Street Declaration.

Sinn Féin has long accepted that northern Protestants have fears about their civil and religious liberties and we have consistently asserted that these liberties must be guaranteed and protected.

We seek to be part of the building of a society which can reflect and uphold the diversity of all our people. Our vision is of a free Ireland, a peaceful Ireland, a unity of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter with all citizens, guaranteeing the civil and religious rights of all other citizens. We hold to the words of the 1916 Proclamation, which said:

"The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past."

Sinn Féin seeks a new constitution of Ireland with a charter of rights.

### Issues of immediate concern

Sinn Féin is determined to build on the positive achievements of the past 18 months by pressing ahead with the peace process. In addition, we will also look at more specific, short-term and intermediate-term objectives to develop the potential which the peace process has already provided for addressing issues of immediate concern. This means winning and maintaining support for the neglected nationalist people at every level, ensuring

parity of esteem and equality of treatment and co-operating with others to secure international support for the following objectives:

- That there is no return to unionist domination.

- That Sinn Féin activists must be able to represent our electorate in conditions of peace, free from harassment and the threat by loyalist death squads.

- That the rights of women and of Gaeilge must be fully recognised.

- An equality of status for the Irish language, including funding must be secured.

- There must be an end to:

- Censorship laws.

- Job discrimination.

- The underlying sectarian bias in the allocation of economic investment.

- Repressive legislation.

- Collusion between Britain's state forces and loyalist death squads at all levels.

### Building a solid foundation

These objectives are all achievable. There is a need for more popular action and consistent and frequent mobilisations in this phase of our struggle. We must do this by building alliances and campaigns.

Sinn Féin will continue to build on the gains already made to increase the momentum for change and to move the peace process forward.

We recognise the need for effective communications with our membership and base. We must strengthen our unity and cohesion and improve our political and organisational capacity and our resources, so that the party is politically primed to initiate and respond in an appropriate and comprehensive way to this developing and hopeful situation.

**THE ACCORD AERODECK. SALOON WITH FUNCTION ROOM.**



**HONDA**

Distributed by Universal Honda Ltd. Telephone No. 456 6382.