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Papers**

**UCDA P254/98**

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

IRISH TIMES 23/7/94

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

**NOTION 1**  
That Sinn Féin considers 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 citizens are essential ingredients of a lasting peace to be established.
- That the citizens cannot have a vote over British policy or over political progress in Ireland.
- That the British government must join the negotiations.
- 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 deinstitutionalisation as part of 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.

## NOTION 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 President Gerry Adams 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 nationalists 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 unprecedented international attention.
- The very different tests 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 promoted 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 verifiable 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 reflects a development in political analysis. It contains many important political implications.

In the context of our commitment to creating a democratic settlement, Sinn Féin willingly acknowledges these. For example:

- The statement in Paragraph 1, the most urgent and important message to remove the causes of conflict.
- The British government for the first time in such direct terms addresses in Paragraph 4 the right of the people of the island of Ireland alone to exercise our right to self-determination.
- The clear recognition that previous 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 oc-

casions in Paragraph 8, as well as Paragraph 9, to define any formal agreement in the context of the island of Ireland.

● The support expressed by both government's for "leading decisions" and their statement that this can only come about "through agreement" and "no-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 the IRA.

● The formal inclusion of Peter Brooke's assertion that Britain has "no selfish strategic 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 assuming that it has "no selfish strategic or economic interest in Northern Ireland" it must be noted that there is no mention of Britain's political interest, which is otherwise.
- In addition, Britain's constitutional guarantee to the union is in various ways at variance of its statement of disinterest.
- Having directly addressed the right of the people of the island of Ireland to self-determination, the line 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 consensual and concurrently given... and by the reaffirmation in Paragraph 2 of "Northern Ireland's voluntary association".
- Sinn Féin, therefore, commits itself to advancing the peace process and to creating the founda-

tion for a lasting peace by building on the positive elements contained in the Downing Street Declaration, by attempting to overcome the difficulties which still exist — in short, by bridging the gaps between what is contained in the Irish Peace Initiative and the Downing Street Declaration.

● Time and time again in the declaration, the veto is re-emphasised.

● The Downing Street Declaration also repeats with variations to the elements, 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 withdrawn or sought, the right to give or withhold consent was not and is not extended to nationalists.

### Bringing 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, timetable, procedures and objectives of a peace process and particularly its 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, by attempting to overcome the difficulties which still exist — in short, by bridging the gaps between what is contained in the Irish Peace Initiative and the Downing Street Declaration.

## NOTION 3

### Advancing the peace process

That Sinn Féin reiterates our commitment to the need for an inclusive society in our country, which would reflect the diversity of all our people. Consent on the part of all the Irish people is necessary for the shaping of new structures in Ireland.

This is entirely different from the perpetuation of a unilateral veto over constitutional change as a precondition of the exercise of the right to Irish self-determination. The veto is a barrier to the consideration or achievement of democratic options for all the Irish people. It has no legal, constitutional or democratic basis. The right of the Irish people to determine our own future free from external impediment is absolute, inalienable and cannot be qualified in any way by the British government.

The consent and agreement of citizens is of course necessary to build a stable and peaceful Ireland. We reiterate our view that the British government should join the negotiations, that is, that they should fulfil their responsibilities by persuading the unionists that they cannot live with the rest of the Irish people.

### New constitution

Sinn Féin reaffirms its commitment to the civil and religious rights of all of the Irish people. We recognise that unionists have democratic rights which not only

can be upheld but must be upheld as an independent Ireland. We believe that those democratic rights would be greatly strengthened in an independent Ireland.

Sinn Féin has long recognised 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, vibrant country 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 desires 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 which have been 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 working and negotiating on behalf of the neglected, marginalised people of 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 Gadjertog 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.

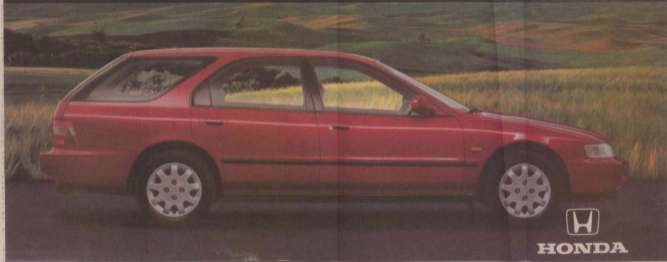
### Building a solid foundation

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 reiterate 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 trained to initiate and respond in an appropriate and comprehensive way to this developing and hopeful situation.

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