



FAX

To: Albert Jordan

From: Eugene Downes

Date: 4 November 1996

Pages: 1 + 5

Please see attached blacks from Thursday last as requested. Only one NI question was reached - priority question no. 1 (text of reply already circulated).

Extract from Blacks of Taoiseach's PAs, 31/10/96

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Supps to 21 (reply already circulated)

Mr. R. Burke: I thank the TÁnaiste for his reply. Does he agree there are basically two alternatives in the North -- violence or dialogue? If we all agree that violence must cease, we must open the way to dialogue. Does he agree that the ground rules document -- from which he quoted today and the Taoiseach quoted yesterday -- while correct in principle, is far too vague? Should the Government not state clearly that, if violence is brought to an end for good, Sinn FÓin will be brought into the talks within weeks, as the TÁnaiste said last night? Is it true, as a Government spokesman claimed, that the two Governments are completely united in their approach? Specifically, is there agreement between the two Governments on the criteria to be applied for entry into the talks?

Mr. Spring: The Deputy makes clear the choices confronting us. One can have either violence or dialogue but they are incompatible. Both Governments have made clear that there can be no departure from the basic rules of democracy and non-violence. There is no question of the admission of Sinn FÓin to negotiations before an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire. In the first instance, Sinn FÓin would have to make clear its total and absolute commitment to the six Mitchell principles, including the complete renunciation of all violence and the total and verifiable disarmament of all paramilitary organisations. It is for the IRA to take the decision unequivocally to restore its ceasefire and make possible the entry of Sinn FÓin into the multi-party talks. As the communiqué of February 28 stipulates, the two Governments will continue to work to ensure that all parties have reassurances that an inclusive

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process will take place but it is for Sinn FÓin and the IRA to restore the ceasefire to make possible their entry to the talks. The Governments are working closely together. The Deputy knows from his own experience that without absolute agreement between and determination on the part of the two Governments, there will not be a successful process.

Mr. R. Burke: I accept that it is up to the IRA. However, does the Tánaiste agree that the British Government and other parties should try, without concession of principle, to make an end to violence attractive rather than unattractive. Does he agree it is essential on this occasion to make clear when Sinn FÓin can expect to enter talks, following a satisfactory ceasefire declaration?

Mr. Spring: I think we should encourage the positive changes which have taken place in republican thinking by keeping open the path which leads from the wilderness of violence to the democratic arena. I think it must also be acknowledged -- and the Deputy will have no difficulty accepting this -- that the atrocities perpetrated by the IRA since February and other evidence of continuing activity have called into question the credibility of the republican movement as a whole.

Take AA - 2.40

In that respect we are at pains to emphasise that we want an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire. We want to move into an inclusive process of all-party talks as quickly as possible and to ensure there are opportunities because it is only in the context of such talks, with people sitting down together around the table, that we will bring about the settlement we are all trying to achieve.

Mr. R. Burke: We all want to see people sitting around the table. I remind the Minister of his words of last night that it is deeply frustrating that not one minute has been devoted to discussions on the substantive political issues in the talks process. Will the Minister agree that what is needed at this stage is clarity on when the talks will start, in the event of an IRA ceasefire for which we all hope? The Taoiseach's statement yesterday was less definitive than the Minister's statement last night in terms of the entry of Sinn Féin into talks. It is important for people outside the House to know exactly where the Government stands on this issue. Is it at one with the British Government on when the talks will commence? There are apparent contradictions between the position of the Taoiseach, the Minister and Sir Patrick Mayhew in terms of the British Prime Minister.

Mr. Spring: There is absolutely no differences of view between the Taoiseach and myself or indeed other ministerial colleagues.

Mr. R. Burke: Expletives are removed in the case of the Minister, Deputy Proinsias De Rossa.

Mr. Spring: There is no change in the Government's position on the conditions and what is necessary. The Deputy asked for clarity, but the most important clarity would be a demonstration by the republican movement that a renewed ceasefire is for real. **There must be no contradictions between words and deeds.** That is the most important aspect in terms of the prospects for the peace process. We urge that the ceasefire be restored so that we can move to get the parties around the table for all-party talks. The Governments are working together to bring that about. **The Government's position is set out very clearly in paragraphs 8 and 9 of the ground rules.**

Mr. R. Burke: I wish to ask a final supplementary.

An Ceann Comhairle: Deputy Burke knows well that there is a time limit to these questions and I cannot devote an undue amount of time to any one question.

Mr. R. Burke: We all want the talks process to start, but because of the apparent differences between the position of the Minister for Foreign Affairs and that of the Taoiseach and between the Minister's office and the British no clear messages are going to Sinn Féin and the people we want to bring into the talks, the people whom we wish to influence in their decision on a cessation of violence. Clarity is required but what we see at present is a fog rather than clarity. The Minister should make a clear statement on when talks will commence in the event of a permanent cessation of violence.

An Ceann Comhairle: Let us not forget the time factor in dealing with these questions, otherwise some priority questions may not be reached.

Mr. Spring: If the Deputy thinks there are apparent differences, that is a

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matter for him. There are no differences. The Government is working as a team in advancing the talks process. It would be difficult to set out an absolutely watertight and detailed scenario in circumstances where there are inevitably many uncertainties and imponderables. The process in which we are engaged, as the Deputy well knows from his experience, is extremely complex and difficult and setting down rigid conditions apart from those on which we are all agreed - a restored ceasefire and signing up to the Mitchell principles - would be counterproductive. In the event of a ceasefire the Governments would seek to apply constructively and in good faith the principles we have set out. They would of course have to take account of the terms of any ceasefire as an important and decisive factor.