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**Take M - 4.20 P.M.**

Deputies Edward O'Keeffe, Lawlor, Martin and O'Dea's matters have been selected for discussion.

#### **Order of Business.**

The Taoiseach: It is proposed to take item 1, the Central Bank Bill, 1996, Order for Second Stage and Second Stage and Private Members' Business, item 32, motion 14 concerning defence policy.

Mr. B. Ahern: I welcome the Taoiseach's support for Mr. John Hume's initiative. Will the Taoiseach agree that the Mitchell principles are a sufficiently demanding test of adherence to exclusively political means? Will he also agree that far from trying to delay Sinn Féin's entry into the talks, we should be getting it to sign up formally to the Mitchell principles thereby binding it to the same rules as everyone else? Will the Taoiseach agree that the Mitchell were designed, among other things, to get over difficulties and obstacles in the peace process? Would he also agree that by pressing Sinn Féin to push the IRA to announce a ceasefire and thereby sign the Mitchell principles, we can get over the many obstacles before us?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: That is not appropriate to the Order of Business, but the Taoiseach may wish to respond.

The Taoiseach: An IRA ceasefire is important because it is the means by which we can have all party negotiations, including Sinn Féin. It is important that the ceasefire is unequivocal and one on which there is no going back. It is



important that is made clear in the way in which it is framed, if it occurs. I said before it is for the Republican movement to convince us in the terms it uses that a restored ceasefire is unequivocal. As the Tánaiste said, the terms of an announced ceasefire would be an important and decisive factor.

It is important to realise that it is not wise to think in terms of recreating a new peace process, a phrase which has been used. A peace process and a talks process is already available. The present talks process represents the result of painstaking work over many months. It contains a number of elements which did not exist in any previous talks process such as independent chairpersons, ground rules which are fair to all and a sufficient consensus rule which does not allow a majority being able to overrule the views of a minority. The process is designed to facilitate the inclusion of all parties, including Sinn Féin, and as Deputy Bertie Ahern said, the transition from a politics which includes the use of violence to one which excludes it. It is with such care that the Mitchell principles were devised.

I hope we will have a ceasefire which will enable the discussion to include all parties. Everybody must exercise their responsibilities in this matter and make the necessary efforts to understand and accommodate the concerns of others and to deal with the fears of others. In that regard, the efforts made by Mr. John Hume, in particular, to bring about a ceasefire have been helpful and useful and have the full support of the Government. His efforts are continuing with the constant involvement and support of the Government.

Miss Harney: I join with the Taoiseach in hoping there will be a renewed IRA ceasefire. There was never any justification for violence nor is there now. It is time the Republican movement made up its mind and chose between politics or violence. These are not interchangeable tactics. We have all party talks and it is important that nobody has a veto in that talks process, whether it is the Provisional IRA or the unionists. It is equally important that the process is not

stalled and that it moves on to deal with the substantive agenda. There is a huge onus on the constitutional parties to ensure that process works because when constitutional politics fails, the vacuum is inevitably filled by the men of violence who use it as an excuse. Mr. John Hume, the two Governments and everyone involved have our support in seeking a full restoration of the ceasefire so everyone can be at the talks table which is what we always wished. People have excluded themselves from the talks table because of their support for and continuous condoning of violence as a way to achieve their political ends.

Mr. B. Ahern: I welcome what the Taoiseach said. When he referred to people speaking about a new process, he was not talking about anyone on the Fianna Fáil benches because that is not our belief. Many people outside the House continuously talk about the word "permanence". The Mitchell principles are the new factor in the situation. If there is a ceasefire, the IRA, or Sinn Féin being its political representative, would have to sign the Mitchell principles which would link it to paragraphs 32 to 38 of the principles. It is not necessary to argue about these issues as we did in autumn 1995 and spring 1995.

The Taoiseach: I was not referring to any party in the House when I spoke about people talking about recreating a new peace process. As every party in this House recognises, we have a peace process and a talks process into which a great deal of work has gone, which is founded on the Mitchell principles and the ground rules document and which is open to all. It has been designed so that it will be open to all and that no aspect of the problem is excluded from the discussion and that no party has a veto on what may be discussed at the talks.

**The passport for entry into the talks is the abandonment of violence. There cannot be a two track process where violence is used part of the time or is**



retained as an option. The Mitchell principles clearly exclude any reversion to the option of violence at any time by a participant. They are unambiguous and exacting in the demands they make on those who sign up. The Mitchell principles are not an empty formula; they are extremely demanding and require wholehearted commitment. Once that commitment is made, the talks process is open for participation. It is a fully inclusive process from which no subject is excluded.

- *asked tomorrow? I put it to the Taoiseach that it would be scandalous for us*

*to proceed with this legislation without the House having seen the details of the proposed sell off and without knowing the exact price and the conditions involved. Are we to proceed with this sale which reduces the involvement of the worker directors in the company without the House seeing the documents affecting it? It is a derogatory price by international standards.*

- *An Leas-Chairman Comhairle: The Deputy has made his point. I do not know whether that is a matter of promised legislation.*

- *The Taoiseach: It is not promised legislation because the legislation is before the House.*

*ally. M. McDowell: It is an unpromised legislation.*

- *Miss Harrow: Last week I talked with the Taoiseach the proposed legislation to establish a food safety authority and he said it would be available as soon as possible. Given the widespread public concern about food safety, will the Taoiseach ensure that the reports available in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry are now published? Will he accept it is not good enough that these reports are locked and that it is important the public should have all*

## **Take N - 4.30**

**Mr. S. Brennan:** Report Stage of the Telecommunications (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill will be taken in the House tomorrow. The Bill seeks to reduce the number of worker directors in Telecom éireann by almost half. Will the Taoiseach make the contract available to this House before the section of the Bill which effectively sells off 20 per cent of the company for a derisory price is agreed tomorrow? I put it to the Taoiseach that it would be scandalous for us to proceed with this legislation without the House having seen the details of this proposed sell off and without knowing the exact price and the conditions involved. Are we to proceed with this sale which reduces the involvement of the worker directors in the company without the House seeing the documents affecting it? It is a derisory price by international standards.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** The Deputy has made his point. I do not know whether that is a matter of promised legislation.

**The Taoiseach:** It is not promised legislation because the legislation is before the House.

**Mr. M. McDowell:** It is on unpromised legislation.

**Miss Harney:** Last week I raised with the Taoiseach the proposed legislation to establish a food safety authority and he said it would be available as soon as possible. Given the widespread public concern about food safety, will the Taoiseach ensure that the reports available in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry are now published? Will he accept it is not good enough that these reports are leaked and that it is important the public should have all



the knowledge that is available in relation to these matters?

**The Taoiseach:** In order to keep the public fully informed all residue testing for the purposes of establishing the safety of food conducted by the Department of Agriculture, Food and Forestry or any other relevant agency will henceforth be published on a quarterly basis up to date so that the information will be accessible to the public promptly.

**Miss Harney:** Will the reports the Department has to date now be published?

**Ms O'Donnell:** The backlog.

**The Taoiseach:** I am anxious to be as comprehensive and full in my answers here but I am also constrained by the fact that this question has been put to me without any particular notice; this is not Question Time to the Minister for Agriculture, Food and Forestry. My understanding is that all the relevant information will be published promptly.

**Mr. McCreevy:** The programme for Government promised openness in all public affairs. Is the Taoiseach now telling the House that shares held by a Minister on behalf of the people which are now to be sold off for a price equivalent to approximately three times the annual profits, given that MCI and BT-----

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** This is not the appropriate time to debate the matter.

**Mr. McCreevy:** Under the new Standing Orders we can raise matters promised in the programme for Government, something we could not do previously. Openness was promised in the programme for Government. Is the

Taoiseach now standing over a deal which sells off shares in Telecom for three times the profits, given that MCI and BT are being sold for 12 times the profits?

Mr. S. Brennan: He is hiding the contract.

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: That matter is not relevant to the Order of Business. The Deputy will have to raise it at another time.

publish the contract. It was done in the case of Irish Life.

Mr. McCreevy: Does the Taoiseach stand over the programme for Government which promised openness in all matters, particularly those of a financial nature?

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: Thank you, Deputy.

Mr. McCreevy: Is the Taoiseach saying "yes" or "no"? Surely the minimum we can expect from this Government-----

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: I am proceeding with the Order of Business.

Details were made known, and the Taoiseach should tell the House the

Mr. S. Brennan: Can we see the contract? with the partners to buy Telecom as our further sale of Telecom shares?

Mr. McCreevy: Is the Taoiseach standing over a deal which sells a State company for three times the profits? Can we see the agreement?

Mr. D. Ahern: It stinks. That's for much cheaper for the Government.

Mr. McCreevy: Are we not getting a copy of this agreement?

It is a simple agreement. The only problem is to disclose the details.

Mr. O'Dea: Deputy McCreevy asked the question I wanted to ask. Does the Taoiseach not intend to comment on this matter? Is it not reasonable to expect the House to see the contract before we complete the process of



passing the legislation?

**Mr. S. Brennan:** He is hiding the contract.

**Mr. D. Ahern:** If the Government does not have anything to hide, it should publish the contract. It was done in the case of Irish Life.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** We may not deal with the matter now. This is the Order of Business.

**Mr. McCreevy:** These are shares held by the Minister on behalf of the people.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** If we do not proceed with the Order of Business in an orderly fashion I will bring it to a conclusion.

**Mr. M. McDowell:** Given that in the case of Greencore and Irish Life all the details were made known, will the Taoiseach at least tell the House the inhibition that was put in the secret contract with the partners to buy Telecom on the further sale of Telecom shares?

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** He may not at this time, Deputy.

**Mr. M. McDowell:** We cannot sign blank cheques for the Government.

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** Deputy McDowell will now desist and raise this matter at a more appropriate time. We will not proceed to debate this issue.

**Mr. Martin:** My question relates to this issue which is on the Order of Business. It relates to the time schedule governing this particular Stage of the

Bill. This is a scandal and the Taoiseach should comment on the reason he will not-----

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy can raise the matter at a more appropriate time. We are dealing now with matters relating to promised legislation

Mr. Martin: My question relates to the Order Paper. We need more transparency. This legislation is before the House. It will conclude tomorrow and unless we have some agreement that the Government will be more transparent on this issue-----

An Leas-Cheann Comhairle: The Deputy is wasting his sweetness on the desert air.

Mr. M. McDowell: What happened to the pane of glass?

Mr. S. Brennan: Will the Taoiseach agree to defer Report Stage of the Bill until this mystery is cleared up?

Mr. Howlin: What mystery?

Mr. S. Brennan: Something stinks here and the Taoiseach knows about it.

Mr. D. Ahern: On a point of order, the issue in relation to this Bill was put to the Whips last week. I did not agree to take the Bill in the time being provided and I am putting the Taoiseach on notice that we will not agree to the taking of the Bill until such time as we get answers to the questions put by all parties on this side of the House.



**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** The matter can be pursued by the Whips.

**Mr. D. Ahern:** Somebody in the Labour Party or Democratic Left might be interested in it also.

**Mrs. O'Rourke:** Will the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste not agree to our proposal to retain four worker directors in Telecom?

**Mr. Martin:** The Taoiseach has forgotten about that.

**Mr. S. Brennan:** The Government is selling the company overseas and firing worker directors. That is some Government.

**Mr. Martin:** On the question of commitments in the programme for Government to education for travellers, will the Taoiseach take steps to ensure the Minister for Education meets with the traveller movement-----

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** Thank you, Deputy Martin.

**Mr. Martin:** For three years these people have sought a meeting and the Minister has refused to meet them.

**Mrs. O'Rourke:** On promised legislation, may I ask the Taoiseach when it is proposed to introduce legislation on the working time directive?

**The Taoiseach:** We hope to be in a position to bring that legislation before the House within the next month or so.

**Mrs. O'Rourke: For Christmas?**

**Mr. T. Kitt:** Two weeks ago the Taoiseach promised me this legislation would be produced in two weeks' time. That contradicts the reply he has just given to Deputy O'Rourke.

**Mrs. O'Rourke: Is there dissent in the Cabinet on this matter?**

**An Leas-Cheann Comhairle:** Does the Taoiseach wish to comment further on the question concerning promised legislation?

**The Taoiseach:** Deputy O'Rourke is trying very hard.

**Mr. S. Brennan:** The Taoiseach is very trying.

**The Taoiseach:** She is exhausting herself trying to find dissent in this Government.

**Mrs. O'Rourke:** It will take a while to exhaust me.



## DÁIL ÉIREANN

4.40

5 November 1996

The Deputy will be tired out if she continues to worry. I would advise her and her colleagues to relax and look forward to Christmas. The Deputy needs to have a positive mental attitude.

**Mr. B. Ahern:** The working time directive is scheduled to clear the House by 24 November. If it is being delayed until next year, that is new information to the workers and employers who are interested in it. Legislation covering superannuation for State workers, including the civil service, local authorities, health boards, the Garda Síochána, the Army and others, provides that whenever a grade gets an increase relevant pensioners also get it. It has been brought to my attention by many Fianna Fáil Deputies that various grades of staff have been told that, regardless of what is achieved in the negotiations taking place under the PCW on restructuring, pensioners will not receive their increase. One letter from the Department of Health to our spokesperson, Deputy Geoghegan-Quinn, and other letters I have seen make it clear that there is uncertainty in this regard. This is creating great anxiety for pensioners and widows and widowers of pensioners. Will the Minister clarify the matter? It would require legislation to make a change and that is why I ask about it on the Order of Business.

**The Taoiseach:** No legislation is promised on this matter. If the Deputy

wishes to pursue it, he should put down a parliamentary question. I will, however, endeavour to get such information as I can on the matter for him. On the working time directive, there may be a slight variation between what I said last week and what I said today in terms of when the Bill will be brought forward, but there is no significance in that. The legislation is at an advanced stage.

**Central Bank Bill, 1996: Order for Second Stage.**

Bill entitled an Act to make provision for the regulation by the Central Bank of Ireland of payment systems and *Bureaux de change*, and to amend and extend the Central Bank Acts, 1942 to 1989 and other enactments, and to provide for related matters.

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Mrs. Doyle):** I move:

That the Second Stage be ordered for today.

Question put and agreed to.

**Central Bank Bill, 1996: Second Stage.**

**Minister of State at the Department of Finance (Mrs. Doyle):** I move: "That the Bill be now read a Second Time."