



Sinn Féin

...news release/nuacht ráiteas...

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For immediate release

9th September 1996

Talks process deeply flawed

Sinn Féin Chairperson Mitchel McLaughlin commenting on the recommencement of the Stormont talks today said:

"Instead of generating hope and renewing optimism, the Stormont talks have reduced hope and undermined confidence even further. The talks process is deeply flawed and most people now accept that it is incapable of achieving a negotiated settlement.

"Salvaging the opportunity for peace, which Sinn Féin believes still exists, is a burden which rests largely with the British and Irish governments but particularly on Mr. Major and his colleagues.

"The basis for any progress and for a credible talks process must be the adoption by the two governments of an equality ethos and an equality led agenda.

"If the peace process is to be restored it will need a clear decisive political talks process, the primary objective of which is a negotiated settlement. That means inclusive dialogue, with no preconditions and structured within a realistic time-frame. It also means the British government actively seeking to build confidence."

ENDS

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For immediate release
8th September 1996

We need to transform the current political climate - Adams

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams speaking on the eve of the recommencement of the talks process at Stormont said:

"The burden of rekindling the hope for peace that was crushed by the British government's abuse of the peace process rests on the two governments, but particularly on Mr. Major and his colleagues.

"No one believes that the talks at Stormont offer any prospect of a negotiated settlement. But the expectancy and desire for peace is as strong today as at any time in the history of conflict on this island.

"If the opportunity for a real and permanent peace is to be restored, if the hope which still exists is to be reawakened, then we need to transform the current political climate. That means the two governments producing a transparent and convincing talks process, with everyone invited, no obstacles placed in the way of dialogue and a realisable time-frame within which negotiations can take place and agreement reached.

"We all knew and expected that the search for peace would be difficult. We also knew that there would be mistakes and failures along the way.

"However, fear of these should not paralyse the hope for real peace. We must learn from the lessons of the past years and redouble our efforts to put the peace process back on the right track." ENDS

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For immediate release

6th September 1996

Adams calls for "decisive political talks process"

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams speaking in Belfast this morning urged "calm, restraint and discipline at this difficult time".

Mr. Adams called for the British government to follow an "equality ethos and to implement an equality led agenda to create the conditions for a credible talks process.

"If the peace process is to be restored we need a clear decisive political talks process whose primary objective is a negotiated settlement. That means inclusive dialogue, with no preconditions and structured within a realistic time-frame."

Mr. Adams said:

"The summer months have been a difficult time. We are still dealing with the political consequences of Drumcree. Those events have not yet been resolved to the satisfaction of the nationalist people. The British government and the Unionist parties can't expect a "business as usual" approach to the current situation.

"Drumcree, and the British government cave-in to the threats of the Unionist leaderships, starkly highlighted the inequalities in this society.

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British policy in the talks at Stormont reflects this inequality. What the situation demands is for the British government to follow an equality ethos and implement an equality led agenda to create the conditions for a credible talks process.

The talks process recommences on Monday. Sinn Féin is excluded from this despite our electoral mandate. The reality, of course, is that our exclusion and the flawed manner in which the process has been structured by the two governments, as well as the approach of the British government and of the Unionist leaderships, has ensured that this is not a peace process.

On the contrary instead of generating hope and optimism the Stormont talks have reduced hope and undermined confidence further.

No-one, not the politicians participating in the talks, not the media covering these talks, not the public watching it, nor the two governments, have any confidence in its ability to make any progress, never mind produce a negotiated settlement. On the contrary many see it as deeply divisive.

If the peace process is to be restored we need a clear decisive political talks process whose primary objective is a negotiated settlement. That means inclusive dialogue, with no pre-conditions and structured within a realistic time-frame. It also means the British government actively seeking to build confidence.

Of course, each week brings its own controversies. This week it was the DUP MP Willie McCrea at Portadown. His attendance was a disgrace and many people were rightly outraged. Many will remember that it was the DUP which established Ulster Resistance and I have not yet heard Mr. McCrea say that he has resigned from that organisation. More importantly however, I have to ask what is the difference between Willie McCrea's conduct at Portadown and the conduct of David Trimble at Drumcree."

Mr. Adams commented on the controversy surrounding an allegation that catholic residents in some areas are boycotting businesses owned by Orange Order members involved in the Drumcree events.

Mr. Adams said:

"The boycott tactic has a long and honourable tradition in Irish life. It is an entirely legitimate, peaceful and democratic tactic. However, anyone organising or participating in a boycott has to be very careful.

"Sinn Féin is opposed to any boycott campaign which is sectarian based or is directed broadly against protestant or unionist businesses. It is understandable that catholic communities which suffered as a consequence of the mass intimidation tactics of the Unionist and Orange leaderships around Drumcree, would decide not to give their custom to businesses owned or run by members of the Orange Order identified as playing a role in those events, until there is an agreement based on the principle of equality of treatment.

"This boycott issue, like so many others, is a symptom of wider problems. Clearly, it would be preferable if we could all sit down around the table and find an accommodation which puts all of these matters behind us."

Concluding Mr. Adams said:

"At this time we are still in a very volatile situation. I would appeal for people to remain calm, restrained and disciplined in the time ahead. This is particularly true for those areas like North Belfast, where loyalist groups and some unionist politicians have been engaged in orchestrating a campaign of attacks against the nationalist community and in Dunloy on Sunday where there is an Orange parade."

ENDS