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Press Centre, 51/55 Falls Road, Belfast
Tel: 230261 Fax: 231723
Press Offg, 51/55 Bóthar na
bhFál, Béal Feirste
Tel: 230261 Facs: 231723

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Adams Launches Scathing Attack on Unionist Leaders

In a scathing criticism of the Unionist leadership, Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams has accused David Trimble and Ian Paisley of "lacking courage" and of having "no vision for the future" because "of their refusal to embrace real dialogue."

Mr Adams said: "David Trimble and Ian Paisley are locked into a past built on sectarianism and a desire to dominate. They are failing their people. They are not providing responsible leadership".

Mr Adams urged: "those in the Churches, the loyal institutions, local community groups and in business who recognise the dangers posed by a narrow old fashioned unionist agenda, to act as a credible alternative, to become champions for change and to reach out to nationalists and republicans."

Mr Adams said:
"Both Mr Trimble and Ian Paisley insist that they refuse to talk to republicans because, they say, republicans support the use of force. This is nonsense. It is also untrue. Neither David Trimble or Ian Paisley can lecture anyone on the use of force. They have demonstrated at the siege of the Garvaghy Road and on other occasions in the past, a capacity for using threats, managing mass intimidation and disruption, and encouraging violence."

They have consistently embraced domination and rejected negotiation. Except when it suits them.

In particular David Trimble's call for mediation in the infighting among loyalists stands in stark contrast to his outright rejection of mediation with his own constituents on the Garvaghy Road or local

Catholic communities elsewhere.

It is no coincidence that the negotiations between the Apprentice Boys, the Black Preceptory and local communities took place, and accommodation was agreed in many areas while Mr Trimble and Mr Paisley were on holiday.

It is obvious also that the unionist leaderships have a conditional and opportunistic approach to the critical issue of dialogue. When it challenges the status quo and raises the potential of real change, they seek to avoid, to prevaricate or reject it.

So too with the Mitchell Principles. Because of the crisis within loyalism Mr Trimble and Mr Paisley are now questioning the right of the loyalist parties to attend the talks at Stormont. They ignore their own blatant flaunting of the Mitchell Principles in July."

Mr Adams concluded:

"The reality is that the talks process at Stormont is not a peace process. It lacks the capacity to produce a negotiated settlement. Moreover it carries no level of credibility among the public. Much of the blame for this can be placed at the door of the Unionist leaders but ultimately it is the British government which has created a flawed process of negotiation which allows David Trimble and Ian Paisley to behave as they do.

On their own the Unionist leaders will not at this time engage positively in any process which can bring a lasting peace because such a process must inevitably bring about change. But progress cannot be held hostage to their narrow view of the world. It is the responsibility of the two governments, the other parties, and those elements within unionism, who regret the squandering of recent opportunities to apply themselves to this task.

Those in the Churches, the loyal institutions, local community groups and in business who recognise the dangers posed by a narrow old fashioned unionist agenda, should become champions for change and reach out to nationalists and republicans."