



## GERRY ADAMS

President of Sinn Féin

51/55 Bóthar na bhFál, Béal Feirste BT12 4PD

3 June 1996

An Taoiseach John Bruton, TD  
Oifig an Taoisigh

(24)

A Chara,

Over recent weeks Sinn Féin has been working intensely, both in our engagements with your officials and in dialogue with a range of others to rebuilt the peace process. This remains our priority as a political party.

In the early stages of the development of the Irish peace process the then Irish government, under your predecessor, Albert Reynolds, played a major role. They did so by moving away from the failed policies of isolation and marginalisation and by engaging with Sinn Féin despite the fact that this was contrary to the accepted approach of successive Irish governments.

The result was the creation of a new climate in which, for the first time since partition, there was an opportunity to resolve rather than simply contain the conflict.

The Irish government at that time acted with courage and imagination in exploring this new approach. Subsequent developments, particularly the IRA cessation, vindicated their position.

Unfortunately, and in contrast, the British government adhered to the old agenda, and to the failed policies of marginalisation and isolation. This eventually led to the collapse of the peace process. In the aftermath of this development your government re-adopted the wholly counter-productive policy of refusing to recognise Sinn Féin's democratic mandate. This continues to be a source of difficulty for the Sinn Féin leadership in our efforts to rebuild the peace process and confidence in it.

As you are aware, Sinn Féin secured a renewed and increased mandate last Thursday. We received this vote on the basis of our political program as a democratic party which campaigns openly and peacefully in pursuit of our political aims.

Those who vote for our party must have the same rights as every other voter and the same access to political representation and the political process as every other voter.

Four weeks ago I welcomed your speech in Finglas as a helpful outline of your government's position on a range of issues affecting the peace process. In this speech you correctly pointed



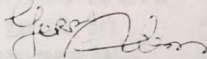
But that as Taoiseach your responsibility extends to the entire Irish nation. This includes those who vote for Sinn Fein. I would, therefore, urge you to act on the logic of this comment and to accept the decision of the people as expressed through the ballot box. If the rights of our voters are to be accepted, then Sinn Fein must be allowed to participate in the political process on the basis of our electoral mandate, that is, on the same basis as every other political party.

The most obvious lesson of the last 25 years, one which was disastrously emphasised over the 18 months of the IRA cessation, is that exclusion and marginalisation do not work. Progress came through dialogue, even where this was contrary to established practice. What is required now is a process based on democratic dialogue, on inclusion and equality.

I am therefore taking this opportunity to urge you to act on this democratic imperative. The recognition of our mandate by the Irish government, even in the absence of a similar approach by the British government, would send a clear signal of the Irish government's commitment to inclusion and equality and would enhance our collective efforts to secure a peaceful climate for the commencement of all-party negotiations.

I understand the pressures you and your government face, but I believe the elections provides an opportunity for a new beginning, for a new approach across the board. Sinn Fein remains absolutely committed to our peace strategy and to the rebuilding the peace process. I would like therefore to take this opportunity to assure you that we will continue to adopt a positive and flexible approach in the interest of our shared objective of a just and lasting political settlement among all the Irish people. Others must also play their part.

Is mise le meas,



Gerry Adams.