

10 January 1997

(Amendments to 10 Oct Given to JH)

Amendment 1. The prospects for success in these negotiations will obviously be much greater if they take place in a peaceful environment. The British And Irish governments agree that, beyond the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, these negotiations are without preconditions. So under the legislation setting up the talks, if there was an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994, Sinn Fein would be invited to nominate a team to join the negotiations at this stage.

Amendment 2. In the light of the recent events, the British and Irish Governments attach even greater importance, if that were possible, to a formal commitment by Sinn Fein to the far-reaching principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body.

Both the British and Irish Governments believe therefore that following the declaration of an unequivocal IRA ceasefire, and following on a commitment by Sinn Fein to exclusively peaceful methods and to abide by the democratic process, Sinn Fein should first be expected to attend a plenary meeting of the negotiations for the specific purpose of accepting the Mitchell principles. This would mean that Sinn Fein would formally affirm, in the presence of all the parties with whom they wish to participate in negotiations, their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body chaired by Senator George Mitchell. The parties in the talks have all done just that already.

From their entry into the negotiations onwards Sinn Fein would, in common with all the other parties to the talks, be subject to all the provisions and rules of procedure governing the Talks, including those governing the contingency where any participant demonstrably dishonoured the principles of democracy and non-violence.

Amendment 3. We are also determined to see these negotiations through to success, as speedily as possible. This is in line with the hopes and aspirations of people in both the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. These have already given momentum to a process which will always have difficulties. The British and Irish governments are committed to an agreed timeframe and calendar for the conduct of the negotiations. The two Government will also review progress at regular intervals, in particular in meetings between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach and between the Tanaiste and the Secretary of State. Overall progress will be reviewed by the end of May 1997, a date set in the legislation.

Amendment 4. So we will continue to pursue social and economic policies based on the principles of equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and parity of esteem irrespective of political, cultural or religious affiliation or gender. This will ensure that there is just and equal treatment for the identity, ethos and aspiration of both communities, including equal treatment for the Irish language and culture. We are also committed to seek as one of the outcomes of negotiations a policing service which can enjoy the support of the entire community.

Amendment 5. The opportunity for progress has never been greater. The process of peace and reconciliation has received valuable economic support from the United States, the European Union and through the International Fund. The negotiations are widely supported internationally and benefit from independent chairmen from the USA, Canada and Finland. They also have the overwhelming support of the people throughout these islands. They want them to take place in a peaceful environment, free of all violence. That is our aim too.