

CONFIDENTIAL



*P. Lee*  
**FAXED**

N10 17/9 16:20

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 2AA

17 September 1996

From the Private Secretary

17 September 1996

*Dear Ken,*

John Major MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London

**LETTER FROM GERRY ADAMS**

I attach a letter from Gerry Adams dated 17 September, which reached us by fax today. The purpose of the letter is not clear. While its last sentence is at least consistent with the points emerging from the Hume/Adams approach, the tone of the rest of the letter is not calculated to encourage us to see Sinn Fein as anxious to join the talks or ready for a new IRA ceasefire, without major changes to the talks process. You will want to consider urgently how this plays into Hume's approaches and how it should therefore be dealt with in the draft paper for NI Committee.

In slower time, I would be grateful for advice on whether, and if so in what terms, a reply should be sent.

I am copying this to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever*

*John*

**JOHN HOLMES**

Ken Lindsay, Esq.,  
Northern Ireland Office.

44 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA Tel: 0726100/0726132 Fax: 07261441

CONFIDENTIAL





# Sinn Féin Ard Oifig

If the peace process is to be restored what is required is a clear and decisive process of negotiations whose prime objective is a agreed political settlement. This means inclusive negotiations with no preconditions and conducted within a realistic time frame.

cc EP  
mess

17 September 1996

John Major MP  
Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London

A Chara

I am writing to you to set out the Sinn Féin view of recent events and the prospects for rebuilding the peace process.

It is quite clear that the prospects for a viable peace process have been further damaged, both by the experience of the talks process itself, prior to the summer recess, and, since then, by events on the ground over the period of the marching season.

The de facto exercise of the unionist veto over the decision to prevent their march through the nationalist Garvaghy Road in Portadown was viewed with consternation among the nationalist community. Most people drew the logical conclusion that if this type of veto could be effectively exercised over the issue of a prohibited march, then it would inevitably be employed again to prevent any change with which the unionist parties disagreed. Such a veto, as Sinn Féin has consistently argued, renders a negotiations process meaningless.

In addition, the unionist parties and the loyalist parties were seen to drive a coach and horses through the Mitchell Principles leading to the conclusion that these principles are a precondition to inclusion directed selectively at Sinn Féin.

The reality is of course that any precondition to dialogue becomes a barrier to progress.

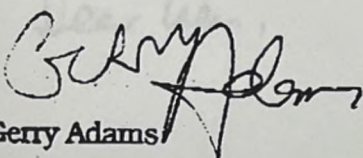
The exclusion of Sinn Féin from the talks, in itself, undermines the ability of the current talks to deliver an agreed and democratic settlement. But the structure and direction of the talks has allowed those who are opposed to negotiations and a negotiated settlement to stall and obstruct progress to a point where confidence and hope has been totally eroded. Instead of



generating hope and optimism the talks, and the approach of the unionist parties to them, has reduced hope and damaged the credibility of the process. Your government should look to ways of building confidence. You can best do this by implementing measures on a range of issues on which movement is necessary if equality of treatment is to be established here.

It is also self-evident that the entire structure and conduct of the talks need to be reviewed and overhauled. If the peace process is to be restored what is required is a clear and decisive process of negotiations whose primary objective is a agreed political settlement. This means inclusive negotiations with no preconditions and conducted within a realistic time frame.

Is mise

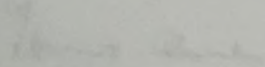
  
Gerry Adams

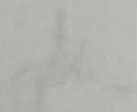
MITCHELL

I should have recorded that when Nancy Soderberg called on me on 16 September, she said that President Clinton was planning to call on Senator Mitchell's help for the televised Presidential debate(s) before the election. She hoped that would not cause too many problems for us, but was not specific about what this might mean in terms of absences from the talks. I said that Mitchell had been away for short periods before. No doubt the process could survive further short absences. But the other independent chairmen, no matter how willing, were no substitute for Mitchell in terms of experience and skills. Long absences would therefore be a problem.

I am not sure whether you were aware of this already. Washington may want to be more specific on the kind of absences we are really talking about.

I am copying this to William Stewart, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, and to the Policy & Communications Unit, Sir John Loe (Washington - by fax).





WILLIAM STEWART