

7. Aug. 1997 14:28

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7723 P. 2/11

*Top - PB*

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## Talks Deadlock

**DUP Position Paper**

**Thursday, 7 August 1997**



7. Aug. 1997 14:28

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7723 P. 3/11

Her Majesty's Government cannot have been unaware of Democratic Unionist dissatisfaction with the basis upon which the present talks process operated. The imposition of a Chairman chosen by two of the participants and foisted upon the rest; the setting of ground rules which have never enjoyed the support of all participants; the insistence by HMG and the Dublin Government that negotiations will be based upon the Framework Document, which has been rejected by unionists, are all issues we have raised on many occasions. The government have been aware of our insistence that the issue of decommissioning and Sinn Fein's entry conditions be addressed satisfactorily. They have not.

No negotiating process can succeed unless it is established on a footing which carries the support, or at the least the acceptance, of all participants. We cannot escape reaching the conclusion that the government does not consider the weight and significance of each delegation in correspondence to its democratic leverage. The DUP succeeded in gaining the third highest number of votes and the second highest number of members returned at the Forum election, which is the basis upon which participation in the present process was, and is, determined.

While talks participation springs from this electoral source, the Government has consistently put greater store in finding an accommodation with, and meeting the demands of, IRA/Sinn Fein, which had a somewhat smaller mandate than the DUP. The Government has shown itself inclined to change and interpret the principles and procedures of the Talks process to effect IRA/Sinn Fein entry, in the full knowledge that parties representing a significantly greater number of people would leave the process. Fear of IRA terrorism has motivated this approach.

The Government has suspended all moral and intellectual judgement, and is readying itself to accept the latest IRA "ceasefire" as genuine. It is set to invite the Provos into negotiations with its arms stockpile untouched and with no requirement for them to disarm the least portion of it during the whole of the talks process. The DUP can no longer be part of this rigged and manipulated process with its predetermined outcome.

The government's capitulation to the IRA's "ceasefire" demands has left the government without respect, credibility, and trust in the unionist community. The present process does not command the support of the unionist community. We consider ourselves well placed to make such a judgement. If you persist with it, others, perhaps to their cost, will discover this in time. All the Government's propaganda, spin doctors, and facilitators will not change that.



7. Aug. 1997 14:29

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7723 P. 4/11

A new process is required to meet the new and altered circumstances. The rejection by the DUP and the wider unionist community of the present charade does not represent a repudiation of talks and negotiations - merely the form and circumstances in which they take place.

The DUP believe that a new process, outside the straight-jacket of the blatantly pro-nationalist conditions that apply to the present arrangements is more likely to produce a successful outcome and less likely to get bogged down in procedural wrangling.

The informality of such an unfettered process, where each delegation can choose whether, or whether not, to communicate with any other delegation, leaves the option open, to those who wish to take it, of sully their democratic credentials by engaging with the mouthpieces of unrepentant killers. For our part we will not, nor will we respond to any proposals they spawn. Such an approach would be built, no less than the existing one, on an intensive and businesslike foundation designed to ensure that all the material issues are covered and every possibility of searching for agreement is taken.

The DUP does not see it as being inconsistent with the existing legislative provision for a new arrangement to be cast which operates on a more *à la carte* footing. We have no predisposition as to whether such a new formulation is established within the *Entry to Negotiations Act* or outside its provisions, providing that such a new process takes account of the following factors:-

- (1) An agreement on the role of participating delegations in the assessment of whether Sinn Fein/IRA have met the prescribed entry conditions;
- (2) Acceptance that the talks will not function on the basis of plenary meetings - unless all participating delegations agree;
- (3) There will be no requirement to meet or communicate with Sinn Fein/IRA;
- (4) Unionist delegations may use separate accommodation if they wish;
- (5) The negotiations will not be based on or tied to the Framework Document proposals;
- (6) Agreement that any undertaking which has been given to Sinn Fein/IRA, in any form, has no binding effect on the process unless it gains sufficient consensus from participating delegations;



7. Aug. 1997 14:29

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7723 P. 5/11

- (7) There is a necessity to have a precise understanding of the conditions that would merit the exclusion of Sinn Fein/IRA and a common appreciation of the means of monitoring the activities of the IRA and its use of any names of convenience;
- (8) There needs to be a consideration of how best to limit the tendency of HMG and the Dublin administration to seek to control and direct the process;
- (9) The steps the government intends to take to ensure disarmament takes place;
- (10) A clear agreement is sought on the definition and application of "the principle of consent" as the government applies it to the outcome of any process;
- (11) An undertaking is required from *our government* on its role within the process *vis a vis* its *partnership* with the nationalist delegations.
- (12) Confirmation is sought from Her Majesty's Government:-
  - [i] on its, so far ambiguous, attitude to the illegal and immoral claims of Articles 2 & 3 of the Dublin Constitution. Is our government totally committed to the removal of any and all territorial claims to Northern Ireland made in the Republic's Constitution?
  - [ii] that it does not expect, and will not require, unionists to be involved in any renegotiation of the Union unless and until a decision to that effect has been taken, in a referendum, by the people of Northern Ireland alone.
  - [iii] that normal British-style democratic decision taking [based on adhering to the will of a majority] will govern the process and its outcome.

We would need to be satisfied, in the form of a written commitment (similar to that given to those with a lesser mandate) from the Government, on each of these points before agreeing to participate in a new arrangement.



Aug. 1997 14:29

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 7723 P. 6/11

It need hardly be said that we would take a dim view if the present process were to continue unchanged without the Government taking the same care and patience to meet our concerns as they were with others. We would consider it our duty to the unionist community to alert them to the nature and direction of the present process. We would take our case to the people seeking their support in persuading all unionists against continued participation in what is now a device irredeemably tilted in favour of the pan-nationalist front.