

19. Dec. 1997 16:40

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 0701 P. 2/4

*David Keogh*

273-3965

**BBC RADIO ULSTER - GOOD MORNING ULSTER - 19 DECEMBER 1997****INTERVIEW WITH DAVID ERVINE**

INTERVIEWER

Is this a reflection of what was being said by William Smith yesterday that you have had enough of what he called one sided gestures to republicans?

DAVID ERVINE

Yes I think so. I think we need to clarify though that it is not simply about the prisoner issue, it is about both Governments behaving in a manner that is disingenuous by having confidence-building measures outside of the process when indeed we have a confidence-building structure within the process. A confidence-building committee met on Tuesday at 3pm to deal with the issue of prisoners, at no point was there ever a suggestion that there would be prisoner releases, it was never discussed, our people were never told about it and when I am glad handing on Tuesday evening with the Minister from both sides Merry Christmas and all the rest of that they leave without a single notion that this is likely to be an exocet launched into our constituency causing us serious difficulty which we are meant to analyse and we have no knowledge of.

INTERVIEWER

How do you explain to your constituents the fact the since the end of the IRA ceasefire I think the figure now is 16 republicans mainly south of the border have in fact been released?

DAVID ERVINE

Well it is pretty difficult, but we have always known that there were things we would have to take on the chin, for instance the repatriation of IRA prisoners was something we knew we would in many ways would have to take on the chin because there wasn't a reciprocal possibility for loyalism in the same circumstances. However one fears terribly that there is a process going outside the negotiated process which indeed destroys the sanctity of the process itself and that is what we are flagging up. We would be seen as selfish over the prisoner issue and we have good reason for caring about the prisoner issue but



19. Dec. 1997 16:41

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 0701 P. 3/4

this is not just about the prisoner issue, although the prisoner issue is a straw that is likely to break the camel's back. What it does indicate is that the Governments are playing a double game with the people who are the participants within the negotiations and with the IRA outside the negotiations.

INTERVIEWER

What is that game do you believe? What is the sub-text of the approach of both Governments?

DAVID ERVINE

It is very simple that there is one section of our society whose agreement is valued above all others and that cannot be allowed in a negotiated process and I do say that it is unlikely that the Progressive Unionists Party will take its place on 12 January because I do not believe that there is the time or the opportunity for these two Governments to come to terms with the fact of how they have treated not just us but all of the other participants. The situation is grave, it is very serious and they have like Mr Magoo gone through this process with the planks falling all down around them, we have been warning them, we have privately warned them, I have directly talked to the Secretary of State about confidence-building measures outside the process damaging the sanctity of the process itself and we have held this process up on an absolute high, we have done everything in our power to give a positive spin to the process that is the opportunity for the people of Northern Ireland but when you are operating in a process that is disingenuous and being controlled in a disingenuous manner we are left with little or no choice because we don't know where that disingenuous behaviour will lead us.

INTERVIEWER

If you don't go back briefly in January does that mean you are out of the process for good?

DAVID ERVINE

I hesitate even to say that we are coming out of the process. I am fearful of all that that entails but I also cannot, cannot be the person who is at the vanguard



19. Dec. 1997 16:41

S OF S PRIVATE OFFICE 1712106722

No. 0701 P. 4/4

of taking the Progressive Unionist Party into those talks in the knowledge that we are being treated in a shabby and disgraceful manner.