

The International Body

Meeting with Representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)
January 18, 1996
London

Participants: David Trimble, Ken Maginnis

Summary

Representatives of the Ulster Unionist Party (UUP) agreed to provide a text on the elected body proposal to the International Body for its consideration; alleged that 74% of SDLP members favor decommissioning and 68% endorse an elected body; stated that Sinn Fein has a choice, decommissioning or an elected body, but cannot say no to both and expect to participate in negotiations; and underscored the absolute importance of the principle of consent to unionists.

Account of Meeting

Trimble agreed to provide a text on his elected body idea to the IB by noon Saturday, January 20.

Maginnis urged that whatever the IB decides be done and expressed within the context of what society in Northern Ireland actually expects. In Northern Ireland, 60% support total decommissioning before all-party talks. 23% endorse partial decommissioning within the context of an overall plan for total decommissioning. The breadth of pro-decommissioning sentiment may not be reflected in what John Hume tells the IB. Sooner or later they will move away from the situation in which they say "no, no, no." We are trying to move out of an endgame situation.

Trimble said if they want dialogue they must decommission or accept an elected body. They cannot say no to both. 74% of SDLP members support decommissioning and 68% of nationalists endorse an elected body. Sinn Fein has to choose one route or the other.

Maginnis said that Sinn Fein acknowledgement of consent would be a breakthrough since SF/IRA has not accepted the Downing Street Declaration. Consent is absolutely essential. The unionist community is somewhat cynical after 25 years of violence. Trimble said Sinn Fein knows it cannot achieve its objectives on a normal electoral basis. That is why they want to keep their weapons.

Maginnis said that in 1992 the UUP tried to go to Dublin on a range of issues but got poked in the eye. In our recent correspondence with Dick Spring, we enclosed a memorandum with details of our elected body ideas. An elected body would have a statutory obligation to address wider issues and have committees to look into these issues. In an elected body, a procedure would be established whereby the Irish Government could give evidence to a committee on pertinent issues.