

BBC RADIO ULSTER 'NEWSBREAK'

18.11.96

INTERVIEW WITH DAVID TRIMBLE

INTERVIEWER

Much speculation abounds. What's your view on it, is it smoke without fire?

DAVID TRIMBLE

Well what has been happening over the course of the last month or more is that the IRA have set in process a whole series of rumours about ceasefires. Now I don't think there is much substance in this because I don't think they can meet the requirements that were set out by the British Government in February and are embodied in the legislation by reference, and that includes the commitment to peaceful means and the democratic process, but they're endeavouring to, by spreading these rumours, to hold back the talks process and they're also trying through, I'm sorry to say, the offices of John Hume, to try and get the Governments to abandon the requirements that there be a commitment to peaceful means and the democratic process to enable them to enter into the talks. Now I don't think that is realistic, I don't think it's realistic politics to look in these terms and I wish that the Irish Government, in particular, and the British Government, to a lesser extent, would stop holding back things and would put an end to the rumours by clarifying their position and enabling the talks to proceed.

INTERVIEWER

One proposal is that there could be a ceasefire before Christmas but the talks would be suspended until after a general election which would be, at the latest, in May in the early summer. Is that something you could go along with?

DAVID TRIMBLE

No one has made that suggestion to me and no one has discussed that suggestion as if it was serious and I don't regard it as serious. I don't know where that idea is coming from. But I don't regard it as being worthy of comment.

INTERVIEWER

Do you think though that there is anything in the apparent exchange of ideas between Martin McGuinness and the Secretary of State over the weekend? At arms length of course but do you think there is any sign of a movement there?

DAVID TRIMBLE

Well I must say I very much deprecate the behaviour of Sir Patrick Mayhew in making that speech in Manchester. He clearly appears to

be trying to semaphore something to the IRA. I think actually insensitive to be doing that in Manchester which was bombed by the IRA earlier this year and I think it's bound to give rise to certain amount of unease amongst people in Northern Ireland when they see this sort of behaviour and they wonder what is the substance, is there any fire behind all this smoke? Now I, this reinforces to my mind the need for openness and for the British Government, in particular, to clarify its position, something we've been asking them to do for some time, and the sooner they do it the better.

**INTERVIEWER**

Let's move on Mr Trimble to the vital gun control debate in the Commons today. Will you be going to the Commons today?

**DAVID TRIMBLE**

Personally I won't be because I have a constituency engagement this evening. The Ulster Unionist party has a free vote tonight. I'm not sure just how many of my colleagues will be there and which way they will vote. I think you will have to wait for that, define itself as the evening goes on.

**INTERVIEWER**

Are you trying to send any message by not being there. I know you have business but there would be votes, I'm sure, for which you would go?

**DAVID TRIMBLE**

No what you said earlier, and I said myself and this reflects my own position, that I wouldn't and I don't support the amendment coming forward from the Labour Party to ban all handguns, make all handguns legal. I have said for some time I wouldn't support that position. Some people wrongly assume that I would be voting with the Government but it didn't it just meant that I wouldn't be voting for the Labour amendment.

**INTERVIEWER**

Do you have a pairing arrangement for .....

**DAVID TRIMBLE**

My absence this evening reflects that position. No I'm not paired because if you're paired with someone and the person you're paired with means that you're establishing a position. I don't support the Labour proposal to ban all hand guns I think it is not the appropriate response to the very grave situation that we've been faced with.