

**Transcript of Mitchell McLoughlin
on Morning Ireland
on Wednesday 27th November 1996**

Richard Crowley:

Joining me now from Derry is Sinn Fein's Chairman Mitchel McLoughlin, who warned at the weekend that a British rejection of the latest proposals would be "a lethal miscalculation". Mr. McLoughlin is this a rejection, an outright rejection in your view?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

Well, I think people should be very very concerned, but I am encouraged to hear Dick Spring indicating that at least for the Irish Government they have not shifted their position and I think the key question, given that there is studied ambiguity in the statement from Downing Street. The key question is have the British Government under pressure from David Trimble shifted the goal posts yet again.

Richard Crowley:

So you don't see it an outright, as a definitive rejection, it's hardly an acceptance, but it's not the former either?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

It's certainly not an acceptance, but I do think that people are rightly concerned that in fact John Major intends to raise a barrier to Sinn Fein's entry into negotiations and that would have the most profound implications for all of us on this island.

Richard Crowley:

But as you say there is a glimmer of hope, certainly in what Dick Spring was saying there. He spoke of gaps to be bridged, how do you bridge that gap in your view?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

Yes, and I think that in developing the proposals John Hume and Gerry Adams have, in fact, taken at face value the position that both Government's stated

after Canary Wharf and I believe that proposals that are in front of John Major at the present time provide reasonable expectation that we can in fact revive the peace process, but it depends crucially on John Major's ability to respond in a positive fashion. And I think that those including the comments of the Leader of Fianna Fail this morning who indicate their concern also that the British Government in fact are running in front of the leverage that David Trimble can exert and the difficulties that John Major has with his own backbenchers in the light of this forthcoming British Election are very very serious implications indeed to the immediate future.

Richard Crowley:

But do you see those proposals, those Hume/Adams proposals as a final offer before the whole thing slides into anarchy or chaos?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

Well, I think it's something of a miracle, that they have been able to create a proposition that revives the possibility of an IRA cessation and I think that what is required now is a leap of faith on all sides, and it includes John Major, despite his difficulties and everybody accepts that he has problems and we are not getting that encouragement from him. In fact, I believe his response so far has sabotaged the efforts of those who are trying to rebuild the peace process.

Richard Crowley:

But if there is a glimmer of hope there is certainly no suggestion that he will accept these proposals in their entirety and that presumably would not be good enough for the IRA. It wouldn't give them enough reasons to call a ceasefire. Is that true?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

Well in fact there is only three elements to it. So it's difficult to see where in fact the problem would arise, unless of course, there are new preconditions being imposed by the British Government. What Sinn Fein have actually developed with John Hume is a proposition on terms of the negotiations without preconditions, which is the stated position of both Governments on a time frame given that both Government's in their own way have approached that question and there is a ball park there. And the range of confidence building measures that's within the existing legislative power and authority of both Government's. That in fact is a package that is eminently reasonable and deliverable. The question would be is John Major going to come back with new preconditions based on the position that he stated last February. That I think is the key question that we all should be attempting to find out.

Richard Crowley:

He still has to come back and spell out his reaction in writing. Are you hopeful that there can be some movement and the question really is is that some movement enough?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

Well the realist in me tells me that John Major is going to reject this package and that he will attempt to manage the public presentation of that. But let us cling to whatever hope remains that in fact he will see the value in opening negotiations, inclusive negotiations and creating the conditions in which that can happen in an entirely peaceful atmosphere. Until he actually rejects them in writing I intend and my party intends and John Hume I am certain will continue to work this process.

Richard Crowley:

What then did you mean by a lethal miscalculation, because some may have taken that as a threat that there would be an renewed IRA bombing campaign, or a bombing campaign in the lead up to Christmas?

Mitchel McLoughlin:

No, I think that people will draw their own sensible conclusions from the policies that have persisted for the last 27 years which have not resolved this issue, but indeed, in many instances have actually sustained it. Lets not return to that. What we have here is a clear opportunity to move forward and I am encouraged by the indications from the Tánaiste that the Irish Government recognise this opportunity and I would hope that there are strenuous efforts being made at Government level to ensure that John Major does not turn the clock back.

Richard Crowley:

Sinn Fein Chairman, Mitchel McLoughlin thank you.

ENDS.