



GERRY ADAMS
SINN FÉIN
PRESIDENT

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31/1/97.

An Taoiseach, Mr John Bruton
Oifig an Taoisigh.

A Chara,

I am writing to you regarding the continued exclusion of our party from the discussions at Stormont. This is despite the fact that Sinn Féin has a larger electoral mandate than most of the parties in attendance.

On Monday, 27/1/97, Michael Ancram outlined his belief that the parties representing the loyalist paramilitaries in the talks should not be excluded despite the very obvious and blatant breaches in their conditional ceasefire. I share the view that these parties should remain at the talks. But Sinn Féin should be at the talks also.

As you know, Sinn Féin does not represent the IRA. Sinn Féin is not involved in political violence. We are a peaceful, democratic party committed to negotiations and agreement to resolve the conflict in this country. We are entitled to be involved in negotiations on behalf of the tens of thousands of Irish people who vote for our party. The exclusion of Sinn Féin is undemocratic and underlines the hypocrisy and double standards which have marked the British government's tactical approach to the peace process throughout. The clear purpose has been to prevent Sinn Féin involvement in political negotiations.

The reality is that the British government has not dealt with Sinn Féin on the basis of equality of treatment. It was the British government which excluded Sinn Féin from the talks. It was the British government which persistently called into question the quality of the IRA cessation.

An entirely different set of rules are applied in relation to loyalist

participation. The words of the CLMC are, apparently, enough to allow the loyalist parties to participate in dialogue when the loyalists paramilitaries are quite blatantly involved in sectarian violence, when events on the ground have shown the loyalist ceasefire to be an empty charade.

Similarly the British government has also chosen to ignore involvement of the unionist parties in the mass intimidation and violence which surrounded the Orange march through the Garvaghy Road last July.

Then there is the British government's own responsibility for the widespread violence used by their forces including the firing of 6000 plastic bullets and the British Army killing of Dermot Mc Shane in Derry last July.

The Irish government, as co-sponsor of the negotiations, has a clear responsibility to confront such blatant inequality and double standards. The reality which both governments now refuse to acknowledge is that Sinn Fein has an electoral mandate and the democratic right to represent our electorate at any political talks on the future of this island. The two governments exclude us from talks and deny our party and our electorate our democratic rights.

On December 14 last John Major rejected proposals put by John Hume and myself to him on October 10. These proposals were aimed at restoring the peace process. Instead a whole new set of preconditions and obstacles were outlined unilaterally by the British in relation to Sinn Fein's entry into talks.

The reality is that the demands which are being made of Sinn Fein on matters over which we have no control are not being applied to the other parties.

The most recent example of this is the loyalist parties which can attend the talks while the UDA and the UVF, which they represent, continue to target nationalists and republicans, train, manufacture weapons and import arms. In addition they carry out armed, punishment beatings and (increasingly) shootings, intimidation and attacks on isolated catholic families and communities. Their recent car bomb attacks have manifestly ended their ceasefire.

Clearly what is required if we are to salvage and develop the opportunity for peace is the recognition of all electoral mandates, an

end to these double standards and the construction of a credible and inclusive process of negotiations which is the only means to an agreed and lasting peace settlement. British government policy has prevented this happening. Despite this the onus to put in place a credible negotiations process still lies with the two governments.

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Gerry Adams

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