

GARY McMICHAEL ON EXIT FROM LANCASTER HOUSE,

26 JANUARY 1998

GARY McMICHAEL Right, we went through the process this morning with dealing with the concerns which were being raised by the Governments in terms of our participation within the negotiating process. First of all, can I say that a plenary was to be called shortly, I would imagine to outline whatever the Government's decision is. We don't know what the Governments decision is. We haven't been speaking with the Chairman or the Secretary of State. But we believe that what we are dealing with fait accompli. Having listened to the views of the participants, the other political parties in the course of this afternoon, it is clear that those parties have a firm view. With the exception of the PUP, Women's Coalition and the Labour Party that we should be excluded from this process. In our belief while those parties don't want to have their fingerprints being put on that decision specifically as shown by their failure and unwillingness to formally indict the UDP. They have left the

left for the press a copy of the defence and response we made this morning, which fairly and clearly outlines the UDP's position in terms of the concerns of other parties.

MEDIA

With the Government's decision is suspension rather than expulsion. Does that change things?

GARY McMICHAEL

We will wait and see what the Government's decision is. We don't know what it is yet. We think it is a fait accompli. I think it is quite clear that the Governments are left with no choice here, that we will be removed from this process. We are not going to sit in the plenary this afternoon to have ourselves humiliated in such a fashion, when it is quite clear that the parties want that to be the case. What I am saying it is important that it is recognised that we are not walking away from this process either, that we are firmly committed to it. And that we still have a lot of work to do in this area and a contribution to make.

MEDIA

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NA HK

GARY McMICHAEL

Well, I think what we have to look at this situation with some clarity. The UDP is firmly, absolutely, irrevocably, committed to the Mitchell Principles and the Principles of democracy. What we have done during this current crisis is to go to extreme lengths in order to exert our influence to end violence where it emanated from. We have done that, quite clearly our efforts are not what the parties are judging us upon. And the commitment to this party to the Mitchell Principles is irrelevant in the minds of many of the parties who contributed this morning. That in no way detracts from our continued commitment to this process and we are not going to give up. We will continue to work hard to ensure that there is a positive outcome to this process. Obviously, it has been seriously hampered by the fact that we are going to be excluded. I think that we will analysis the Governments formal response and its terms and conditions whatever they may be if there are any laid down and see what our position is from then.

MEDIA

What about the UFF ceasefire?

NA HK

GARY McMICHAEL

I don't see that this has an implication to the UFF ceasefire at all. Well what the position of that ceasefire is a matter for them. I think it's clear that despite the cycle of violence which has taken place over a period of time and the appalling violence we have seen inflicted upon our entire community from many sources that the UFF statement on Friday was a positive contribution to a difficult situation where their violence ended. Now what we're saying here is that we're not walking away from this process, Loyalists should not walk away from this process and we remain in a position where we seek to influence this process and we want back into these negotiations on the same par as all other parties as quickly as possible.

MEDIA

Gary, are you satisfied, are you absolutely satisfied that they have the issue of that UFF statement that no further killings or that the UFF have not any sense been linked or involved as is deeply suspected from the Catholic community of any other acts of violence, are you satisfied about that?

GARY McMICHAEL

We are absolutely satisfied and if I

can on behalf of our party that we are not in the business of deception, we have been honest and forthright in our views consistently throughout this process and clearly the reason why we have been ejected from these negotiations is because we exercised our influence and in some small way contributed to bringing one element of the violence to its end and unfortunately because that was done in an honest way and that the UFF made a statement in an honest that we are penalised because of that, you know it's clear that others could sponsor violence or have groups engaged in violence and consistently deny it despite the facts and the evidence. I think that the UFF have taken an honourable position, we have an honourable position, we're not going to go into the plenary this afternoon and be subject to a fait accompli, in a compressed system of procedure which inconsistent with what has gone before in similar circumstances but neither are we going to walk away from this process because we have our responsibilities to fulfil and we will continue to do that.

MEDIA

strengthen the hands of those loyalists who are party to

violence now play ahead?

GARY McMICHAEL

I think that the absence of any party from these negotiations makes it more difficult for negotiations to succeed and therefore fails in stability but under no circumstances are we arguing that because of the events which have taken place that the UFF ceasefire should end or that there should be an escalation of violence. In fact we continue and will maintain our call but the violence which is still taking place and those who are responsible for that violence and those who are contemplating further violence should end it because this process is getting rockier and rockier and rockier as it goes. Today is another example of that but we are committed to it and we want to see it salvaged.

MEDIA

Do you think you were honest when you said there were no weapons involved in these killings. No one in the UFF led you to believe that there was.

MR WHITE

No we don't feel betrayed we believe the sincerity of the UFF statement and if that was the case we would certainly seriously question our relationship with the UFF but we believe that they're sincere in what they said and we have no reason to disbelieve the statement issued.

MEDIA

MR WHITE

MEDIA

~~MR ADAMS~~

GARY MCM.

this before.

Well they haven't lied to or misled to us at any occasion.

What is the reaction of the UFF prisoners to this?

Well I think that that story would need to be told since the cycle of violence started some weeks ago the prisoners were doing all in their ability to try and bring an end to the cycle of violence. They would be very disappointed that we have had to leave this talks process because they have supported us for quite some time now and it'll be very disappointing to all them but I'm sure they still give us their support in our efforts to be back into the process.

MEDIA

~~MR ADAMS~~

GARY MCM

Did you give the Secretary of State a deadline to get this sorted.

No that's absolutely untrue.

MEDIA

~~MR ADAMS~~

GARY MCM

Gary, can I ask you is this getting out ahead of the posse or are you trying to be helpful to the process suggesting you might have done this. We sat this morning and listened to the consensus of opinion from parties round the table, now as Gary has outlined earlier there were parties who were entirely supportive of the UDP position, there were others who

obviously wanted us ejected but didn't want to have their fingerprints on that decision. We deliberated during the lunch break and decided that what was going to happen was almost a foregone conclusion so we decided to come out now and what I'll also say here the people of Northern Ireland, let them consider the part that the UDP has played, not only over this last 3½ years, for the past 7 years, to try and bring a peaceful, stable, settlement to Northern Ireland both within the process and outside it, both during the process and before, let them consider our efforts on that score and let them decide the, people of Northern Ireland, why they feel this has been a just day, why this has been a day for democracy.