

**NORTHERN IRELAND WOMEN'S COALITION RESPONSE TO THE
ALLIANCE PARTY SUBMISSION ON BREACHES OF THE MITCHELL
PRINCIPLES - SEPTEMBER 1996**

1. You will know chairman that the Women's Coalition made a strong speech about the actions of the UUP and the DUP surrounding Drumcree. While we would have preferred to move into substantive talks rather than spend time indicting one another, it is our view that the UUP and the DUP have tested the Mitchell Principles to their limit and we would like to explain why.
2. Those around this table will remember the post-Drumcree debate when we posed a series of questions to the UUP about their behaviour, about the quality of their leadership and about their responsibilities.
3. We contrasted in that speech the actions of the main unionist parties with the loyalist parties. The UUP and the DUP defended mob action, facing down the forces of law and order, and roadblocks. The PUP and the UDP tried to calm the situation.
4. As the Secretary of State has said, Drumcree was "a week in which the rule of law was violently, deliberately and, it has to be said, successfully challenged."
5. But the significance of Drumcree goes beyond that and to the heart of these talks. The DUP in its indictment of the PUP and the UDP last week failed to show the link between the CLMC ultimatum and the operation of the Mitchell principles for these talks. But the relationship between Drumcree and these talks is all too obvious. The UUP and DUP have shown their willingness to encourage by their words and deeds, if not to lead, the use of force to overthrow the State should decisions not be to their liking. And in the words of the Secretary of State such a challenge with the force of militant majoritarianism that we have witnessed would be likely to succeed.
6. This is most recently illustrated by the words of John Hunter of the UUP "Drumcree has shown what we have always known since the UWC days that we can still bring the State to its knees". Such a threat is fundamental and devastating
7. As we said in our post-Drumcree speech. "It was not the worst week of violence in Northern Irish history it was a bad week of violence but the not the worst ever. But it was the worst week ever in its implications for the future of Northern Ireland and for the future of a compromise and a negotiated settlement. Northern Ireland and the world saw an unwillingness to negotiate, an inability to compromise and the might of majoritarianism forcing the overturn of a decision".

8. It is not acceptable that political leaders should attempt to wipe their hands of the situation and claim distance from the train of events which they put in motion and fuelled with speeches, and which they did not seek to restrain. We provided evidence from speeches made by the UUP and the DUP that the situation was foreseen by the UUP and the DUP, if not entirely plotted.

9. On 8 July Jeffery Donaldson spoke in the Forum "I have no doubt that this will go far beyond the confines of Drumcree and Portadown". On 10 July Ian Paisley Jnr. said "A message is going out to Ulster proclaiming that the sleeping giant of Ulster loyalism is stirring and who can tell what actions it will take in defence of itself and in defiance of republicanism."

10. And Jeffery Donaldson has not convinced us that when he talked about the Drumcree contingency plans for every eventuality on 4 July that he did not mean amassing forces at Drumcree, allowing road blocks and storing heavy equipment.

11. Statement after statement by UUP and DUP leaders escalated the situation to the extent that in the words of the DUP leader it was not "the siege of Drumcree but the siege of Ulster". Far from regretting these statements and actions, the DUP written defence to the indictment continues to uphold their right to take these steps in their words to "uphold the principles of democracy and non-violence".

12. In our view the threat of this militant majoritarianism must be removed. Its ability to overthrow any decisions it does not like has been demonstrated in Drumcree. Any use of force, which could be used to overthrow the State or the results of these talks, must be strenuously rejected.

13. The relationship between the impact of Drumcree and these talks is all too obvious, but it is also subtle. There is no direct line from one to the other; but the underlying threat is always there lurking in the background. This is why in our view the UUP and the DUP have tested the Mitchell Principles to the limit.

14. We do require clear statement from both the UUP and particularly the DUP given the content of their written defence, that they reaffirm their commitment to the Mitchell Principles - particularly those they came close to breaking:

- a) To democratic and exclusively peaceful means of resolving issues;
- b) To renounce for themselves, and oppose any effort by others to use force, or threaten to use force to influence the course or the outcome of all party negotiations;
- e) To agree to abide by the terms of all agreement reached in all-party negotiations and to resort to democratic and exclusively peaceful methods in trying to alter any aspect of that outcome with which they may disagree.

15. In our response to the indictment of the PUP and UDP last week we draw attention to the Governments' discretion under Rule 29 in deciding the appropriate action to be taken by them. Whatever the judgement of the Governments on whether or not the Mitchell Principles have been breached, we are of the view that no party should be excluded from these talks.

16. Indeed we are of the opinion that Sinn Fein should be included in these talks on the basis of their mandate. We understand the decision of the Governments to seek a renewal of the cease-fire. We wish to see a renewed and strengthened cease-fire which is clearly stated and unambiguous. However in our view the defacto cease-fire which has existed since the outrages in Britain earlier this year stands in stark contrast to the use of force defended by leading politicians who call themselves constitutional politicians.

17. We wish to see the expression of the ideals of the International Body. As well as commitment and adherence to what are commonly known as the six Mitchell Principles, we also want commitment and adherence to a meaningful and inclusive process of negotiation. What we are here for is to address legitimate concerns and to achieve new political arrangements with which all can identify. We should without further delay turn ourselves to that task.

10th September, 1996

This speech was prepared by Bronagh Hinds but not given.