

27/11/02

## NOTES RE DUBLIN FORUM MEETING

1. We need to be clear about
  - (A) The Purpose;
  - (B) The Remit
  - (C) The Added Value aspect of the re-convened Forum.
  
2. From the NIWC perspective we noted that the recent meeting the fact that most of the participants mentioned the 'lack of confidence' issue with regard to the implementation of the Agreement. What we want to know is what the re-convened Forum can do to address this 'lack of confidence' issue. We feel –
  - The Forum needs to clearly identify and address those outstanding issues within the Agreement that need to be progressed on a southern or all-island basis (eg. the North-South Consultative Forum; the Charter for Fundamental Rights; Victims issues; the re-integration of ex-prisoners; etc.)
  - We need the development of a shared understanding about the reasons for the 'lack of confidence' by southern political parties. This can not only take place within the context of a pan- nationalist perspective, but should seek to examine Unionist positions as well
  - Southern parties should examine both the 'cold house for Unionists' perspective of John Reid and Tony Blair's acknowledgement that Catholic Nationalists were second class citizens in the past. How accurate are these statements and what are their implications – particularly with regard to southern political analysis over the past 35 years
  
3. We would welcome how the Forum could actively consider how issues of tolerance, acceptance of diversity of identity and political aspiration could be addressed on an all-island basis. This would address issues of sectarianism and racism, as well as the relationships between states and churches
  
4. The NIWC would wish to see new ways of ensuring that Unionist/Loyalist views are reflected in the Forum deliberations. There should have been more of an effort to include them through active consultation. Surveys and other approaches could be used. We are exploring the possibility of reflecting views through video inputs.
  
5. Organisationally, the Forum should not be about party leaders grand-standing. It needs to be organised in such a way that will facilitate reflection and exchange – not point scoring debate. This might be better arranged through the use of Working Groups.
  
6. The NIWC would welcome meetings of the Coalition being held outside of Dublin. Meetings in the Border area should also be considered.
  
7. It is crucial that the Forum does not attempt to second guess the implementation talks in Northern Ireland.

Avila

## ADDITIONAL BRIEF NOTE ON FORUM FOR PEACE & RECONCILIATION

Date- 27<sup>th</sup> November 2002.

Venue- Dublin Castle.

### 1. Fianna Fail

- The Forum could play an useful role in the context of the political challenge raised by suspension. It might make a contribution to finding a way forward.
- The previous meetings of the Forum placed an important bridging role between the ceasefires and the 1996 all-party Talks.
- Noted the changing nature of the questions asked about the IRA.
- Noted the importance of a fully inclusive Policing Board.
- Parity of esteem is an useful concept – but it requires a great deal more to be done about it.
- The Forum can offer an exchange of ideas; debate and honest arguments.

### 2. SDLP

- The Forum has a record of making an useful contribution. It has galvanized the central place of peace and reconciliation.
- The Agreement belongs to the people of North and South.
- We are not here to gang up on any particular parties.
- We need to help focus on confidence building for Unionists – dealing with paramilitarism and the patchy implementation of the Agreement; the devolution of justice and policing; and the Implementation Compact.
- There are outstanding issues that we also need to consider – the establishment of the North-South Parliamentary Forum; the Charter of Fundamental Rights; the North-South Consultative Forum.
- We might proceed in Working Group format.
- We need to set a benchmark for what is needed from the British Government.
- We need to consider constitutional guarantees around the Agreement for the future, both within the island of Ireland and between these islands. It is important that the Agreement is not seen as an one-way exercise.

### 3. Fine Gael

- What we have to address is the lack of confidence.
- All paramilitary organisations should give up violence.
- Decommissioning; demilitarisation and policing must be on the agenda.
- Sinn Fein should take their seats on the Policing Board.

### 4. Labour

- The Forum can offer a means of democratic discourse.
- The Republican Movement has to go further in building trust.
- The IRA fears that any statement that the war is over will be seen as an admission of defeat.
- There needs to be decommissioning.
- The IRA should disband as a response to the will of the people of this island – not just Unionists. They would then have a right to demand a response from Unionists.
- Attack on Trimble for his comments.

## 5. Sinn Fein

- We need to take stock of where we have come from and where we want to go.
- The British Government needs to implement the Agreement in full.
- They have moved outside the Good Friday Agreement with their strategy of suspension.
- The Human Rights and Equality issues need to be addressed.
- Policing arrangements needs to reflect the understanding within the Agreement.
- There needs to be a National Campaign against sectarianism.
- There needs to be a National Campaign around the issue of Irish Rights and Unity.
- There should be northern representation in the Houses of the Oireachtas.
- The issue of victims should be addressed.

## 6. Progressive Democrats

- There is a problem with Loyalist violence.
- There is also a problem with the continued existence of the IRA.
- Hope is a requirement.
- 'Too long a sacrifice can make a stone of the heart' – our patience in the Republic is not inexhaustible.
- The Forum should be a source of reflection.

## 7. Alliance Party

- The Forum should allow the airing of views – it is not a negotiating body.
- What can Sinn Fein now offer around the issue of victims and the disappeared.
- Will the SDLP use the exclusion clause ?
- Question to Fianna Fail – why are Sinn Fein unacceptable to the Government in the Republic?
- We must recognise the differences in Northern and Southern reaction to different issues, eg. early release of prisoners.
- There is a deep feeling of unease amongst Protestants in the North.
- We need to ask the question – has the Agreement entrenched divisions? We need to review and reform the Agreement.
- There needs to be a Bill of Rights in the Republic.
- There are community relations problems across Ireland.

## 8. Green Party

- Complained that a Border Poll would be majoritarian in nature.
- Questioned D'Hondt as consolidating divisions.
- Complained about the fudge around controversial issues.
- The role of the Forum should be reflective.
- The party designations in the Assembly was a debacle – we should look at other voting systems.
- The task for the Forum was to create an enabling context.
- We need to argue a modus vivendi that goes beyond the Agreement.
- The Forum should have bilateral meetings with Unionist parties, and invite Civic representation as well.
- We need to mandate a coordinating committee of the Forum.

**9. Independent Deputies (Marion Harkin)**

- Spoke on the issue of integrated education.
- Emphasised the need to listen.

**10. Northern Ireland Women's Coalition**

- As per speech.

**11. Socialist Party**

- A socialist analysis of the situation – need to gather the working class around shared issues.

**12. Workers' Party**

- Need to address the issue of sectarianism.
- Citizenship is the best antidote to sectarianism.

**AOB –**

**Maurice Hayes emphasised that the gathering was not a pan nationalist front.**

**Planning meeting for next Forum gathering – 10<sup>th</sup> December 2002.**

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