



# Ulster Unionist Party

3 Glengall Street, Belfast BT12 5AE  
Telephone: 01232 324601 Fax: 01232 246738  
E-mail: uup@uup.org

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FOR YOUR ATTENTION

EMIRE SPEECH BY MR. DAVID TRIMBLE 7/4/96

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Leader of the Party: DAVID TRIMBLE MP  
Patron: COLONEL JAMES G CUNNINGHAM, OBE, DL  
President: MORTAS CUNNINGHAM, MA, DL Chief Executive: JIM WILSON

DAVID TRIMBLE MP  
Ulster Unionist, Upper Bann

17 April 1996

Speaking to the Trinity College Dublin Dining Club, London

Yesterday's announcement of the Northern Ireland Bill and the second reading debate tomorrow confirm that we are on course for elections, the creation of an elected Forum where there can be a public debate on Northern Ireland's future with parallel private negotiations - a new form of "twin-track".

The public and private parts of this process are two sides of the same coin and there should be no conflict or antagonism between the two tracks. After all the same Northern Ireland parties will be in the each track and in both tracks there will have to be agreement by the major parties as to what is done.

In our original conception we had envisaged that the two elements would be within the same track, just as they had been in the Constitutional Convention in 1975. They have been separated to allay the concerns expressed by nationalists.

There are, however, certain disadvantages attendant on this separation. Under our original concept there was only one precondition to participation: - namely to be elected and to take your seat. That did not mean that we were waiving our concerns about the need to be committed to exclusively



peaceful means, evidenced by the decommissioning of illegal weapons. These concerns would have continued and the extent to which any party met or failed to meet those concerns would have affected their involvement on the continuum between debate and negotiation. My preference had been to keep the greatest flexibility possible in the design of procedures so that the parties involved would be free to respond to circumstances as they may exist when the time comes.

Nationalist insistence on defining the details in advance together with the resumption of violence by Sinn Fein/IRA has kept the issue of peaceful means and decommissioning to the fore.

Not that this should surprise us. The Report of the Dublin Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, entitled "Paths to a Political Settlement in Ireland" - suppressed because of the refusal of Sinn Fein to accept the principle of consent - states in its "Principles and Requirements",

"The first principle must be the right to peace ... the pursuit of all political goals ... must be undertaken by exclusively democratic and peaceful means ... free from violence and coercion."

It is for this reason that the Communique issued by the British and Irish Governments on 28 February 1996 says

"all participants [in talks] would need to make clear at the beginning of the discussions their total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the Report of the International Body. They would also need to address, at that stage, its proposals on decommissioning." (emphasis added)

Unfortunately in the so-called ground rules paper this clear statement is then followed by some paragraphs of "Anglo-Irish-speak". These remind one of the success of the British and Irish civil servants at winning last year's award for the worse example of official gobbledegook for their Frameworks document, and suggest they are going for a repeat this year.

It is important to remind ourselves of what Mitchell actually said. Its proposals are contained in two sets of recommendations. First on "Principles of Democracy and Non-violence" in paras 19 to 23 and secondly on "Guidelines on the Modalities of Decommissioning" in paras 36 to 50".

The first set, to which both Governments insist there be a "total and absolute commitment" at the beginning include

- "the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations;" (b)
- "to renounce for themselves, and to oppose any effort by others, to use, or threaten to use force to influence the course or the outcome of all party negotiations;" (d)
- "to urge that 'punishment' killings and beatings stop and to take effective steps to prevent such actions;" (f)

The Mitchell Commission hoped that these commitments, "when made and honoured before during and after all-party negotiations" would remove the threat of force from them.

It is these commitments that must be made at the very beginning of talks. Making such commitments involves more than just a verbal assent. It requires an acceptance that the commitments will be honoured - that actions will follow words. This is what is meant by the reference to addressing the Mitchell's guidelines on the modalities of decommissioning. We will need to have commitments on those guidelines



and undertakings as to the implementation of the Mitchell principle (b) "the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations".

It is at this point that the Mitchell suggestion of decommissioning alongside talks may be considered. That suggestion was not part of the Mitchell recommendations. But when Mitchell was published we indicated an acceptance of all of Mitchell - its recommendations, suggestions and confidence building measures - we would be content will all these matters being addressed.

However there has been a significant development since the publication of Mitchell. When we indicated a willingness to move from prior decommissioning to parallel decommissioning there had been 15 months of relative non-violence. Eighteen days after we made that concession, Sinn Fein/IRA bombed London. That action makes a difference: it does not make matters easier for those who resorted to violence; it makes it harder.

Sinn Fein/IRA have demonstrated clearly that they are in breach of the Mitchell principles. They have in fact used force to influence the course of negotiations in contravention of Mitchell's principle (d). In addition paragraph 30 of Mitchell talks of the need for assurances

"that the commitment to peaceful and democratic means by those formerly supportive of politically motivated violence is genuine and irreversible."

We are entitled to enquire from those who have been loud in their support for Mitchell what assurances they envisage are to be offered and to doubt whether any such assurances will be credible.



We can read in today's paper of just how insincere Sinn Fein/IRA were during the relative peace of the so-called cease-fire. The inquest on Mr O'Brien, the bomber from Gorey, Co Wexford, was told that as early as August 1994 he was acting as an agent for the IRA on the mainland: that from October 1995 he was preparing a stockpile of bombs: that during the Clinton visit he was drawing up plans. The Westminster Coroner rightly described the conduct of the IRA as duplicitous. There can be no place for such duplicity in the future.

In view of the character and record of Sinn Fein/IRA you may ask what prospect there is of progress in June. The answer is that there is a vital difference between the situation today and the period before 9 February 1996. During the latter time the refusal of Sinn Fein/IRA to prove their good faith operated as a bar to any talks. Now their refusal will only operate as a bar to their own participation.

There is now a process in place that will go on after 10 June, with Sinn Fein, if they establish good faith, but without them if they do not. I hope that come June there will be clear commitments and clear decisions. However, some of the weaker brethren among the democratic parties can be expected to show a lack of the necessary firmness of character. It would therefore be advisable for the constitutional parties to agree before 10 June on a simple, clear and expeditious procedure to deal with this issue so that the beginning of talks is not marred by wrangling over this issue.

It is, however, our intention to use this opportunity to achieve real progress - to give all the people of Northern Ireland the chance to leave behind the violence of the last 25 years and to also leave behind those persons and parties whose mindset is still embedded in violence. We hope that people will seize the opportunity of the election to show that they too wish to move forward in this way.