

GERRY ADAMS DOORSTEPPED EN ROUTE TO USA - 12 MARCH 1996

ADAMS:

I think we shouldn't be distracted by the Unionists being in the White House. The Unionists were always invited to the White House and they always chose to stay outside. And I'm sure they'll have a great St Patrick's Night and, of course, I'm disappointed I won't be there to drown my shamrock with David Trimble and the rest of them. Let's not read too much into all of this. If you have an Irish Government which is refusing access to Government property - to Sinn Fein - and the British Government which is doing exactly the same thing, we can't expect the White House to take up a different position.

Q: You say you're going to the US because you want the gun taken out of politics. Are we closer to the prospect of you approaching the IRA?

ADAMS:

John Hume and I spoke to the IRA, I think, a number of weeks ago, just, and while there was a very negative, if you like, aspect to that meeting, in that the IRA are very very sceptical, very distrustful of the British - and one could say understandably enough, given the attitude of the British Prime Minister - at the same I time I take succour from the fact that the IRA did commit itself to a negotiated settlement, did commit itself to be part of resolving this conflict, on the basis that it was without pre-conditions and in an inclusive way. And also committed itself to looking at any alternative way of moving forward. And what John Hume and I did before the cessation, was to work. What we did during the cessation was to work. And what we are doing now is to work also. The IRA can read and interpret the situation as it evolves for itself. It doesn't need me or anyone else to translate that to them. What I want to see are the conditions for peace-making restored with all speed.

Q: Are the conditions there? Don't you think the IRA owe it to President Clinton?

ADAMS:

First of all, the IRA will have to study carefully what President Clinton has said and they will have to study what everyone else is saying in the situation. But let's be very very very clear about

all of this. We are in a difficult position. I want to see the peace process restored. There was a wasted opportunity of a year and a half which has created some considerable difficulties for everyone. And I have to say that the exclusion of Sinn Fein by the British Government and by the Irish Government is not helpful. One cannot hope to make the type of progress as speedily as I would want to make it if there is an active policy and strategy of disenfranchising that section of people who vote for our party.

ENDS.