

Sinn Fein and their commitment to "peace"

1. The Irish Government and John Hume among others accept entirely that Sinn Fein is the Political Wing of the IRA. John Hume said on RTE at the start of the year that Sinn Fein members supported the "strategy and tactics of the IRA".

2. Sinn Fein as a Party is different from a fully democratic party (legitimate questions can of course be raised about the DUP's commitment to exclusively peaceful methods). The guns and semtex are still there. It seems unlikely that they will be used in the short to medium term but the weapons are still present.

3. The fact that they have stopped killing people should never allow us to believe that there was ever any justification for violence by the IRA or the loyalists. Unlike South Africa there were alternative political outlets for Nationalists and Unionists. We should never be afraid to say that the killings were always unjustifiable. Our position since 1970 of unambiguously opposing violence from all sources is clearly vindicated.

4. Sinn Fein present Adams as a Mandela type figure. The fundamental difference with South Africa is that in South Africa the issue was one of JUSTICE. When Mandela became President he did not claim jurisdiction over e.g. Namibia or Botswana and there were no external threats to the current borders of South Africa. The Northern Ireland conflict does not and has never been primarily one of justice; rather it is one of two competing Nationalisms orange and green. It should therefore be compared with Bosnia.

5. One doesn't have to be a psychiatrist to realise that words can be used to divert attention away from reality. When someone overuses a apparently inappropriate word it is reasonable to be somewhat sceptical. Sinn Fein's use of the word "peace" has paid huge dividends with both the media and the electorate. Complaining that Sinn Fein are hypocrites however will not get us far.

We can however state clearly that a **real and lasting peace** involves; a) the absence of violence; b) the absence of the threat of violence; and, most importantly, c) the creation of a politically stable society based upon mutual respect.

Often people say that in the 1960's we had peace and Catholics and Protestants got on well together. The reality is that in the 1960's we had a bitterly divided society which contained the seeds that made 25 years of violence almost inevitable.

6. Sinn Fein have benefited from the totally unrealistic and inaccurate depiction in the past of the IRA as "psychopaths", "mad men", "mindless", or "possessed by the devil". The fact is that Gerry Adams and Co always used violence as part of a highly effective political strategy. They clearly **did not** indulge in violence for its own sake. Those Nationalists who claimed over the years that the IRA were unlike the so-called "old IRA" and that they had no ideology were engaged in a simplistic DENIAL process.

Because these alleged psychopaths now talk peace and wear suits many Nationalists (and some others) have gone to the other extreme and assume Adams is a Mandela/Ghandi type figure!

In reality Adams hasn't changed.

The issue for Sinn Fein/IRA was always one of how much politics and how much violence. Currently the balance is very much towards the politics because of the obvious gains which have flowed to them and will continue.

7. One of the reasons why it is difficult to convince the Catholic population of the true nature of Sinn Fein is that the leaders of "constitutional" Unionism have always flirted with loyalist terrorists. Most recently at Stormont Trimble walked in flanked by the representatives of the loyalist murder gangs. Trimble and all the other Unionist leaders at Drumcree 2 indicated that they were not committed to exclusively peaceful means and in essence they breached the Mitchell principles. Given that apart from ourselves and the SDLP no political party is completely committed to the Mitchell principles we have to accept the reality that there is now no point whatsoever in trying to adopt the moral high ground on violence. The reality is that violence pays and we have to accept it.

8. Alliance is not going to make much headway with Sinn Fein by focusing too much upon violence. However our experience at the Forum in Dublin, and already in Belfast, is that they are **extremely vulnerable** when challenged on their core beliefs. It is very important that we always emphasise that Republican and loyalist violence have always been equally obnoxious. Sinn Fein still talk of "loyalist death squads" while they talk about their own "freedom fighters". The loyalists of course do the same.

Sinn Fein is a hard-line sectarian Nationalist Party. They are in fact in reality a Catholic DUP! .

9. The paper which Sinn Fein presented to Mo Mowlam in August was premised upon the fact that (a) they wanted the British to stop interfering in the affairs of the Irish people and (b) the prime responsibility of the British was to tell those Irish people who are unionist and those who are liberal what to think and how to act!

When challenged seriously, as by John Alderdice at Stormont, Adams and McGuinness had been deeply unimpressive.

10. We must not make the mistake of allowing Sinn Fein terminology to pass into the language without being challenged. One obvious example of that is "political prisoners". Amnesty International has always been very clear that a political prisoner is someone who is in prison for their own beliefs, not because they have carried out an act of violence. Amnesty indeed refused to accept members of the ANC who had been involved in violence as political prisoners.

IRA and UVF/UDA prisoners are indeed **politically motivated**.

However we it is an insult to compare people such as the Burmese leader Aung San Suu Kyi who have always been involved in a democratic process.

We must not allow Sinn Fein and others to re-write history!

11. Sinn Fein frequently talk about "peace" to a rather nauseating degree. It is important never to lose an opportunity to challenge them on the reality behind the rhetoric. For example if they talk of genuinely respecting Protestant people they might be asked, (a) what they believe was the impact of IRA violence on Protestants and (b) what specific concrete things they have done to gain the trust of Protestants.

John Hume a Man of Peace

Among the Catholic population, much of the media and to many people further afield John Hume is an Irish Mandela or Ghandi. He is widely seen as a man of peace and it has been practically impossible to challenge this image. Mr Hume is in a sense the Teflon man of Irish Politics and it is very difficult to tackle him directly. After all how can one argue with somebody who is bringing peace!

There are however ways to challenge Hume. The most significant angle is to challenge his overall analysis which, it can be clearly argued, is intrinsically divisive and sectarian.

1. Hume talks all the time about "the two communities". In a very simplistic way he conflates being a Catholic with being a Nationalist and being a Protestant with being a Unionist. He never admits of the possibility of people not being attached to either of "the two main traditions". In the absence of violence it may become easier to develop this theme.

2. The "peace process" was very much underpinned by the development of a Nationalist consensus involving Sinn Fein, the SDLP and the Irish Government. It should always be emphasised that the Alliance Party has always criticised Ulster Unionist leaders who instead of trying to come to an honourable compromise with Alliance and Nationalists spent the time trying to devise a unionist consensus with Paisley.

Our analysis remains that peace will come when we get agreement across the divide that has caused the violence in the first place, the Nationalist/Unionist divide. This inevitably will mean that at some point the SDLP will have to put clear green water

between themselves and Sinn Fein and Trimble has to put clear orange water between himself and the DUP. Given however that the recent political dynamic remains directed towards the creation of a Nationalist consensus this makes an accommodation less likely.

3. We need to emphasise time and time again that Alliance is not and does not wish to be part of "the Unionist family" or "the Nationalist family". The SDLP has a simplistic idea that Alliance is a moderate Unionist Party. By characterising us thus they then feel more comfortable with being a green Nationalist Party but one which is much more allegedly liberal and non sectarian than the orange Nationalist Party! The SDLP become very sensitive however when we emphasise how not only are we not Unionists but that we are the real liberals and the only non sectarian Party in Northern Ireland.

4. Hume and Durkan are fond of evoking Martin Luther King. Luther King however was very clearly committed to bringing black and white together. The two communities analysis of Hume is perhaps rather closer to that of Louis Farrakham and those black American leaders who feel that it will never be possible to bring about a properly integrated pluralist society and that instead black people should mobilise as a group to secure the best possible deal for themselves, doubtless on the basis "of parity of esteem".

5. SDLP rhetoric is very strong on bringing people together and being non sectarian. We can always point out that they have practically no Protestant support. Of their approximately 120 councillors there is not a single Protestant. In a debate one could for example say that the owner of a factory who claimed that he didn't

discriminate but had a work-force that was entirely Protestant, would get short shrift either from the Fair Employment Commission (quite rightly) or the SDLP!

We should be proud to state that we, unlike the SDLP do not represent **one section** of the community, but that we bring together people of all backgrounds who are committed to a set of values which includes an absolute commitment to exclusively democratic and peaceful means and a robustly **anti-sectarian** approach to our problems.

We must emphasise that the root of the problem in Ireland was never the paramilitaries. They were the malign manifestations of a divided and bitter society in which the political process had failed to resolve the underlying problems.

We have a cease-fire. However the real problems remain and the effort made to consolidate Catholic support for an agreed Nationalist approach has in itself inevitably polarised the community further and made achievement of a real agreement more difficult.

We should identify the fact that a real and lasting peace will require not only a political compromise but the people of Northern Ireland both as individuals and as members of a range of communities creating a genuinely integrated society.

6. There are many strong SDLP supporters who are also advocates of integrated schools. Alliance should be much more proactive in using the word Apartheid to describe large elements of our current society (note recent reports from the Community Relations Council) and we should be much more aggressive in promoting issues such as mixed schools, greater integration of sporting and recreational activities,

more integrated living and a much greater emphasis on the need for European money to be used for activities which promote real reconciliation.

7. Hume has talked frequently of Northern Ireland moving towards a "post Nationalist situation". Perhaps we should adopt this term and claim that whereas Hume talks about it, while remaining firmly a Nationalist Party, the Alliance Party actually IS a post Nationalist Party already!

8. The SDLP could be asked to state what the difference is between themselves and Sinn Fein, given that they believe that Sinn Fein is a democratic party. A very strong argument was put by Hume that Adams is someone who was prepared to come in from the extremes and is able to bring people with him. It is therefore argued that Adams should be given every encouragement possible.

The obvious corollary of this is that since Robinson is more pragmatic and realistic than Paisley that all sensible Protestants should be massing behind a Trimble/Robinson consensus and should askew support for Parties such as Alliance!

Words and phrases not to be used by Alliance

Moderate
Middle of the road
In the middle
Pro union
Pro nationalist
The two communities
The peace process
Peace

Words and phrases Alliance should be using

Non-sectarian/anti-sectarian
Centre
Liberal
Pluralist
Third tradition
Cross community
The whole community
A society at peace with itself
The future together
Bringing the community/people together

Dealing with the Ulster Unionists

1. The unionist denunciation of Sinn Fein is fatally compromised by the fact that the UUP has over many years, and most recently when Trimble entered Stormont flanked by the PUP and UDP, had an ambiguous attitude towards loyalist terrorism. Trimble himself was in Vanguard, an organisation clearly not totally committed to exclusively peaceful means! The behaviour of Trimble and Co at Drumcree 2, when they did what the IRA had failed to do which was to make Northern Ireland ungovernable, proved that Trimble is not prepared to support the Mitchell principles. Because of the behaviour of the Unionists Sinn Fein have been able to get away with their own totally unacceptable behaviour.

2. The image of unionism as portrayed by Trimble and Co last year at Drumcree and on other occasions continues to weaken support for Northern Ireland both with all British political parties and the British public at large. The British people will never allow Northern Ireland to be bombed out of the union. However if they believe that those Irish people who claim to be British are completely unreasonable and objectionable compared to Nationalists who appear to talk peace then they are more likely to wish to be rid of all of us.

3. The links which the Unionist Party has with the Orange Order ensure that it remains a deeply sectarian Party. Nationalists, who are not less sectarian than the Unionists in reality, are not so overtly sectarian and thus again the Unionists appear to the world at large to be the more unreasonable people. This makes it much harder to land any punches on Hume and Adams.

4. Because of their position on the above issues, but also because of their lack of ability and professionalism (as shown by Ken McGuinness' pathetic performance against Sinn Fein at Stormont) the Unionist case is further weakened. Sinn Fein are in fact highly vulnerable if challenged in a penetrating way. However the performance of the Unionists to date has been of such poor technical quality that Sinn Fein's more smoothly professional approach becomes even more impressive to neutrals observing the process.

5. The Unionist position is further undermined by the fact that where they are in a majority they remain arrogant and unwilling to share council posts in many areas. This again makes them look petty and sectarian as compared to Nationalists.

6. The Orange Order did in fact gain credibility during the summer, and the Unionist case had been strengthened not weakened, because they made efforts to be reasonable. If Unionist politicians tried to act in a similar fashion their own position would be strengthened and the Nationalist position would be weakened.

7. There are many Catholics in Northern Ireland who while in no sense being Unionist are quite happy to remain within the U.K. If the Unionists wish to maintain the Union in the long term their only hope is to persuade these people that the Union is in many ways a good thing. This will only be done by treating them as first class citizens rather than ramming irredentist orange nationalism down their throats at every opportunity.