

# IRISH NEWS

and Belfast Morning News

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## Major avoids tough stance temptation

Whatever else, no one can claim the Downing Street declaration has been met with indifference. It has been one of the most debated initiatives in recent memory, and even now - a month on - there is still room for hope. That must be a good sign.

In spite of the way Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams and British Prime Minister John Major have squared up to one another, neither has been foolish enough to cut the other off. And that could be seen in yesterday's exchanges.

In view of the upsurge in IRA violence recently, Mr Major must have been severely tempted to harden his line. He had the opportunity to do so a number of times during question time in the House of Commons.

But he stuck to his well-rehearsed comment that there was nothing more on offer than the declaration itself. He told WPs he would not be drawn into negotiations with republicans ahead of a cessation of violence; and he called on Mr Adams to reject violence and embrace the democratic process.

Mr Major said the only question to be answered was by Mr Adams. "Will he stop the violence and enter the democratic process, or will he not? Everything else is fudge."

It was a blunt enough point, and is one which has been asked by people from the nationalist and the unionist traditions.

He went on to say that he and his Irish counterpart Albert Reynolds had "made clear on a number of occasions, the joint declaration is not an invitation for renegotiation". And he went on to claim that "Sir Patrick Mayhew and I have gone to great lengths, in this house and beyond it, to ensure that the joint declaration is fully understood. We shall of course continue to do so. We still await a positive response from the IRA."

But it is clear that the declaration is not "fully understood" by Sinn Féin. Mr Major should put that right. He does not need to worry about drifting into negotiation. As a politician he has been involved in negotiation throughout his public life. He should be able to tell the difference between clarification and negotiation.

Mr Adams certainly has a case when he

enter into discussions, he knows how he may do it: he can decide to give up violence. After three months, he can enter into exploratory talks and then he will be able to enter into the democratic talks process itself. That is the route ahead."

The opportunity for republicanism is to move its "struggle" into a new political phase which, no matter what you think of its policies, its well-organised party structure is more than capable of advancing.

Mr Adams's statement repeated his belief that a stalemate situation existed while clarification was withheld.

But while much of the statement, and a television interview which accompanied it, used the language of republicanism which we have all come to recognise there were some interesting paragraphs which indicated that his mind is not closed.

In the BBC interview he said: "I want to see an end to all armed actions by all factions. The opportunity for peace remains."

And there was an implicit acceptance that the declaration was a first step. "Mr Reynolds says this is the first step, not the solution; the first step, then let us proceed and find out how we take the second step."

To the layman it seems ridiculous, as SDLP leader John Hume said yesterday, for clarification to be refused when "it has already been given to other sources".

In turn, Mr Hume and other commentators have argued with Mr Adams that the declaration does contain the ingredients which would allow the IRA to end its campaign without loss of face. In his statement Mr Adams said: "I am very open to being persuaded that they are right and I look to the Dublin government to provide evidence of this." If he is sincere, and there is no reason to doubt him, it is a clear signal that everything is there to play for.

And he reiterates that he is willing to "assist" the governments bridge the gap between the republican movement's expectations and what is on offer.

Today Mr Hume meets Mr Major for talks in Downing Street. He must emphasise to the prime minister that there is nothing to lose from clarification and

As Mr Major has warned:

## Major fails

POLITICS

By Shane Donaghey

SOMETIMES it never rains but it buckets. After nearly two years of depression, scandal, bad headlines and Norman Lamont, things had been looking up for British Prime Minister John Major.

Less than three weeks after the



points to the recent contacts between the British government and republicans; and asks if the British were not compromised then, how can they be compromised now?

But, interestingly, there was a significant section in Mr Major's response which goes some way to clarifying one of Mr Adams's concerns. The Sinn Fein leader said in his *Irish News* interview on Saturday, and again yesterday, that he could not go to the IRA and ask for an end to violence on the promise alone that, after 12 weeks, exploratory talks would be held to discuss details of the ceasefire and the hand-over of weapons. Mr Major made it clear yesterday that he was offering something beyond exploratory talks in three months time.

Referring to Mr Adams, he told East Antrim MP Roy Beggs: "If he wishes to

everything to gain.

Yesterday Mr Adams said he did not care how that clarification came. Governments have ways of communicating things without compromising themselves. This is a case where a diplomatic sleight of hand is necessary.

One final point is worth noting. In his statement Mr Adams said: "While Sinn Fein remains committed to building a real peace process, as I have said many times before we cannot do so without the co-operation of the British government."

It seems remarkable that the leader of republicanism seems content to pass the initiative back to a British premier when that premier has accepted publicly that the future of Ireland is for the Irish people alone to decide without outside interference.

Downing Street Declaration, which gave the prime minister his best press for some time a succession of petty scandals involving various backbench MPs and junior members of the government have managed to put his latest initiative, back-to-backs if not quite in jeopardy then definitely in the firing line for derision.

Hard on the heels of the revelations of Tim Yeo's playing away from home, comes the resignation of backbencher Andrew Duncan as Parliamentary Private Secretary to Health Minister Brian Mawhinney for buying one. It's not quite sportsmanlike to buy a council house worth £300,000 for £140,000 using a perfectly legal loophole.

Mr Duncan resigned because

- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]
- Mr. [unclear]

JOINT DECLARATION AND POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT:  
VIEW OF MR O BUIGINN

I had lunch with Mr O Buiginn yesterday. We discussed both the Joint Declaration and political development. In summary, he remains optimistic that the Joint Declaration has radically changed the terms of trade for the Provisional Movement: he believes there is a good chance that they will abandon violence after further vacillation but, if they do not, their support would be greatly narrowed and the basis of their campaign will seem obviously as "fascistic". Though he expressed no difference of view in substance on our attitude to political development, he expects no real movement on his side until after the IGC. But in the meantime the DFA will do further preparatory work on the unfinished business on the "Joint Framework Document". The explanation for this, at which Mr O Buiginn hinted, was that the coalition partners had in effect carved up "peace" and "talks" between them. For the moment Mr Reynolds remained centre-stage with efforts to induce the Provisional Movement to give up violence; once there was full engagement with the Talks process Mr Spring and the DFA

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