

FORUM FOR PEACE AND RECONCILIATION

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS HELD AT DUBLIN CASTLE
ON JUNE 2, 1995

Chairperson: Judge Catherine McGuinness

I hereby certify the following to be a true and accurate transcript of my shorthand notes of the above-named proceedings.

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MR. SEAMUS CLOSE: Thank you. Broadcasting, as I see it, and I
would imagine most people in the community see it, as a public

service and I would like at the outset to place on record our thanks for the public service which has been provided to us all, particularly over this past 25 years. Whilst many of us look on the broadcasting service as the provision of news and current affairs I think that we should not forget that it does also involve also entertainment, education, culture etc.. If I would in passing say how much I regret that more and more we seem to be loosing sport from the traditional channels to other media forms and I would like that to be redressed as quickly as possible.

But would I like to concentrate and pose the question really on the presentation of news, and if I might quote from the Ulster Television presentation where they said 'if we continue to ask that one question with only one of two answers, 'Unionist' or 'Nationalist', we fail to recognize the complexity of our attitudes and beliefs, including those which we share' and I would have to say that if I had a criticism it would be that often the news and the presentation of news and current affairs is, to a large degree, sensationalised, almost to the extent that the media would appear at times to be generating it's own news because often it ignores, it ignores that other tradition, that third voice, that voice of moderation and I think that that is to the detriment of the media that that happens and is seen to happen all too often.

If I can give, in a way, an example of this sensationalising, this hyping up of certain stories beyond all real recognition, beyond all real value, and the one example that I would give would be that recent 'will there, will there not be a handshake?', I mean every hour, on the hour and on the half hour, this was shoved down the peoples' throats and quite honestly, the community at the end of the day were sick, sore and tired. And one wonders and one

questions what is the psyche? Why is such concentration, such emphasis put on that which, o.k., it merits some newsworthiness but it is not worthy of being shoved down peoples throats for such a long and protracted period of time.

MR. NEESON: Madam Chairperson, as someone who represents a community whereby 93 percent of that community do not share the same religion as myself, I therefore put a great deal of emphasis on the whole question of trust. And obviously if we are to move forward in the peace and reconciliation process, I regard trust as a major prerequisite. By the same token, I recognize what the

Glencree group have said, that it is essential that those who are participating in the peace process must talk direct to each other in an environment which is both safe and non-threatening and last week in Washington we had the unique opportunity of politicians representing nearly every shade of opinion, both North and South of Ireland, getting together under the same roof in the same room and on many occasions talking directly to one another, all be it on a social basis. I regard that as an important step forward in the peace process. And I am just wondering whether or not both Glencree and Corrymeala view themselves as providing the neutral sort of environment which could be conducive towards the continuation of the sort of dialogue that started last week in Washington and what is associated with that?

I take note of the point that one of the perceived demands of Unionists in relation to the peace process is that an apology should be made for the hurt of the past. But surely, where do you draw the line? We had the visit of the Prince of Wales to Dublin yesterday and the relatives of those particular victims who were cut down on Bloody Sunday were looking for an apology. So do you draw the line or in fact is an apology really a prerequisite of the peace process itself?