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13 September 1995

Mr David Trimble's Public Statements on  
Key Issues Since Becoming Leader of UUP

Decommissioning

1. Mr Trimble consistently refers to the Downing Street Declaration in order to define his position on this issue. He argues that parties formally associated with violence must establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods before they can take part in all party talks.
2. On the BBC radio programme "Inside Politics" on 9 September Mr Trimble argued that "if you look at the principle of establishing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods you would have to conclude that it wouldn't be met by a purely symbolic gesture with regard to a couple of weapons". However, he refused to call for a full decommissioning of IRA weapons before talks, saying that he "was not going to go into the details of it because we see that those details involve complexities and there is where we feel that a commission of experts would be helpful".
3. There has been some degree of ambiguity in Mr Trimble's attitude. In the course of the same interview with Jim Dougal he said that it was unfortunate that the British Government has focused solely on decommissioning as a means to establish the IRA's commitment to peaceful methods. He suggested that "it might be possible to establish that commitment in other ways", but refused to say what these other ways might be.
4. However, on 10 September, in an interview with David Frost, Mr Trimble stated that he supported the British stance in the decommissioning debate. He reiterated his belief that the existence of private armies was incompatible with the commitment to exclusively peaceful methods. He also stated that "this process is going to result in the disbandment of all paramilitary organisations", but that he was not making this "a pre-condition for talks".
5. Mr Frost asked about the possibility of Mr Trimble having informal talks with Mr Gerry Adams. This was ruled out with Mr Trimble saying that "there could be no question of such talks until Sinn Fein had met the requirements set out in the Downing Street Declaration".
6. In a UTV interview on 11 September, Mr Trimble was asked

to clarify his position on decommissioning. In reply he stated that "what we want to avoid is a situation where a mere symbolic gesture with some weapons and some explosives is regarded as the key to inter-party talks. The real requirement is that there be a change of heart, a decision to turn your back permanently on terrorism and commit yourself to peaceful methods". He went on to say that he did not believe that the IRA had gone this far.

7. Following his meeting with the Minister for Social Welfare on 11 September, Mr Trimble suggested that constitutional nationalists had a duty to make Sinn Fein realise that the IRA must decommission its weapons. He stated that Republicans could not take part in talks while still harbouring the idea of returning to violence if they did not get their way.

#### Talks with Irish Government

8. During the "Inside Politics" programme on 9 September, Mr Trimble said that he hoped to meet the Taoiseach "sooner rather than later" and that he also wanted to meet other "major players" in the Republic. When asked about the prospect of moving into all party talks with Dublin he stated that "when the conditions are right and if the conditions are right, yes. But there is a lot of work to be done beforehand".
9. On 9 September, in an RTE interview, Mr Trimble refused to put a timetable on the issue of all party talks saying that "we certainly don't want to have a situation as in 1992 where hopes were raised only to be dashed and I think we should be careful and make sure that preparation is done".
10. In the course of an interview on RTE's "This Week" programme on 10 September, Mr Trimble said that he wanted to see the Republic become a "good neighbour". This, he suggested, would entail the abstention from all "hostile propaganda", the "abandonment of territorial claims" and "accepting the existence and the legitimacy of the wishes of the people of Northern Ireland".
11. Following his meeting with the Minister for Social Welfare, which Mr Trimble described as a "friendly exchange of views", he was asked in an interview on UTV if he would talk to the Taoiseach about constitutional issues. In an evasive answer, he said that in speaking to people in the Republic he would focus on what "is called the peace process".

### Relations with other Unionist parties

12. In the David Frost interview on 10 September, Mr Trimble expressed his support for Unionist unity and stated his belief that "the divisions that have existed among Ulster Unionists have not helped the situation, and I think it would be much better...if there was a single Unionist party". He conceded that there is not an immediate prospect of it but that he would like to see it happen in the "medium term".
13. During the "This Week" interview on 10 September, Mr Trimble stated that should Mr Robert McCartney wish to join the UUP he "will be welcome".
14. On 12 September it was confirmed that Mr Trimble, Mr Peter Robinson and Mr Robert McCartney are to hold talks on 16 September.

### Framework Document

15. Mr Trimble voiced his opposition to the Framework Document during his interview with David Frost. He said that it contained proposals which "threaten the continued existence of the UK".
16. During the course of a radio phone in on 11 September, Mr Trimble made clear his opposition to any cross-Border arrangements which might have constitutional significance. He said he was completely opposed to the creation of "a constitutional halfway house" for something that could be represented in the way that the Council of Ireland had been represented in 1974. He stated that he would look at the issue of cooperation with the Republic "on pragmatic grounds, provided that the arrangements were devoid of constitutional significance". He also questioned the practical benefits of North/South economic cooperation by suggesting that the two jurisdictions were in economic competition with each other.

### Power Sharing

17. Mr David Trimble made it clear during his "Inside Politics" interview on 9 September that while in 1975 he had supported Bill Craig's proposal for power sharing, the question now was rather one of "proportionality". He acknowledged that he did not have a problem with the idea of sitting in Cabinet with nationalists, but he stated that the current position of his party is that "cabinets are appropriate for Parliaments whereas for the Assembly that we envisage the different form of administration

through Committees on the principle of proportionality is more appropriate".

Anglo-Irish Division (Political Section)  
13 September 1995

cc. PST, PSS, Second Secretary, Fergus Finlay,  
Counsellors AI, Messers Murray, Teahon and Donlon  
(Dept. Taoiseach), Mr Tim Dalton (Dept. Justice),  
Secretariat, Ambs. London, Washington.