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Sinn Féin

Nuacht ráiteas/News release

The following is the text of a speech issued to our office. 27/9/95
Embargoed until 8 pm Wednesday 27/9/95

Speaking tonight in Belfast at one of a series of internal party meetings in the run up to Saturday's national conference in Dublin, Party President Gerry Adams accused the British government of having **"no peace strategy"**. Mr Adams said the **"British government's dangerous attitude threatens to destroy all that we have worked for because it insists on pursuing the victory through politics which eluded it through war"**.

The Sinn Féin President called for; **"The British block on negotiations to be removed, not explained or justified. All-party peace talks should be initiated as a matter of urgency and within an agreed timeframe. There needs to be positive and effective action by those, in Ireland and abroad, who support this peace process to move the situation forward. There needs to be a pro-active and planned approach, particularly by the Irish government. We need to know when the peace talks will commence so that those of us who are committed to consolidating this new era, those of us who are committed to building peace, can get on with the work of building peace."**

As the Taoiseach, John Bruton, said recently, the peace process cannot stand still. If it is not moving forward it is in danger of moving back....The absence on any movement towards negotiations and therefore towards a negotiated settlement is at the heart of the growing frustration and tension.

Speaking on the issue of "consent" Mr Adams said:
"Sinn Féin believes that the consent of all sections of our people can be obtained if the relevant parties but particularly the British and Irish governments demonstrate the political will to achieve it. I have always stressed the need for unionist involvement in the peace process. Peace is not possible without them. Efforts to marginalise or to ignore or to exclude other political opinions do not work. It is also undemocratic. So, every effort must be made to involve the unionists."



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Mr Adams concluded: *"If John Major digs deeper behind his irresponsible and impossible demand for an IRA surrender, then this phase of the peace process will end in despair and the hope born of years of hard work and risk will be lost."*

The full text of Mr Adams remarks:

"The greatest challenge facing us today is to resolve the causes of conflict which have confronted generations of Irish people. How we do that - how we fulfil the potential, the ideals and dreams of the struggle for democratic rights and equality, will determine whether our children and future generations enjoy peace and justice.

Sinn Féin believes that the wish of the majority of the Irish people is for Irish unity. The emerging political and economic imperatives both within Ireland and within the broader context of greater European political union support the logic of Irish unity. Sinn Féin's republican vision of the future is well known. But our primary commitment is to a negotiated peace settlement.

"This is most urgent task facing the people of Ireland and Britain. It is to advance the peace process, setting democracy, equality, justice and political stability as its clear objectives. Dialogue and all embracing negotiations in the context of democratic principles must be the means to that end. We must seek a negotiated settlement which respects the diversity of all our people.

Partition has failed. It has had a distorting and debilitating effect on Irish political development. Since its creation 74 years ago, the six county statelet has been in constant crisis. Its survival has always been dependent on the existence and exercise of repressive legislation, coercion and discrimination. Its existence lies at the heart of the present conflict and divisions, both in Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.



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The six county state remains politically and economically unstable and unviable. Partition locks nationalists in the north into a state to which they owe no allegiance. It ties unionists to a negative laager view of themselves and their future. Consequently, there can be no internal based settlement. We must move beyond the very clear failure of partitionist structures.

In this context the argument that the consent of the unionist population is a precondition for any political movement is bogus and without democratic basis. I have consistently said that the allegiance and support of unionists is needed to secure a peace settlement. But, consent applied in an absolutest way effectively becomes a veto, locking the unionists into a no-change mindset and locking out the prospect of accommodation.

Arguments in favour of a unionist veto are a subversion of the concept of consent. The British government continues to uphold the unionist veto in an obvious attempt to predetermine the outcome of negotiations. The consequence of this is in effect to set as a British objective the maintenance of partition and consequently the maintenance of the primary source of the conflict. If they are to be successful, inclusive negotiations must address all relevant issues without vetos, without preconditions and without any attempt to predetermine the outcome.

Sinn Féin believes that the consent of all sections of our people can be obtained if the relevant parties but particularly the British and Irish governments demonstrate the political will to achieve it. I have always stressed the need for unionist involvement in the peace process. Peace is not possible without them. Efforts to marginalise or to ignore or to exclude other political opinions do not work. It is also undemocratic. So, every effort must be made to involve the unionists.

Regrettably, instead of focussing on these core political and constitutional issues and looking to the future, in the months since the IRA cessation the British government has reduced the debate to a single item agenda - the demand for a surrender of IRA weapons.



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20 months ago on my first trip to the USA I accused the British government of engaging in bad faith negotiations. The British stance has hardened since then and the record of prevarication, stalling and shifting of goalposts which we have witnessed since August 31st last year speaks for itself.

Therein lies the crux of the present crisis which now threatens to undermine the peace process and destroy the valuable work which has already been achieved.

The British government has reneged on clearly given commitments. They are acting in bad faith. They continue to pursue an agenda of war in a situation which requires an agenda for peace.

If the peace process is to move forward the dithering, the stalling, the blocking has to be replaced by a real commitment, on all sides, to find a settlement.

The entire logic of a peace process is that through substantive all-party peace talks we arrive at a peace settlement which removes the causes of the conflict and takes the guns, forever, from Irish politics.

The British block on negotiations needs to be removed, not explained or justified. All-party peace talks should be initiated as a matter of urgency and within an agreed timeframe. There needs to be positive and effective action by those, in Ireland and abroad, who support this peace process to move the situation forward. There needs to be a pro-active and planned approach, particularly by the Irish government. We need to know when the peace talks will commence so that those of us who are committed to consolidating this new era, those of us who are committed to building peace, can get on with the work of building peace.

As Mr Bruton, said recently, the peace process cannot stand still. If it is not moving forward it is in danger of moving back. It must be moved forward if it is to be sustained and brought to fruition. The absence of any movement toward negotiations and therefore towards a negotiated settlement is at the heart of the growing frustration and tension.

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The British government has no conflict resolution strategy, it has no plan to consolidate the new situation. Instead it pursues the victory through politics which eluded it through war.

The political vacuum created by this strategy has to be filled. Britain's negativity requires, in fact, it demands positive and effective action from those who are committed to the success of this peace process; to the securing of a negotiated settlement in Ireland.

The peace process does not belong to the British government. It should belong to the Irish people. We who have created the opportunity for peace, who have taken the risks, who have built the peace process and who support a process of peaceful change, we need to remove the obstacles to forward movement. This is our responsibility in Ireland, in Britain and in North America. Peace in Ireland cannot simply sit and wait until the British government is ready or willing to move. We need to move the peace process into negotiations - into all-party peace talks, as the only way to secure an agreed political settlement and therefore a sustainable peace.

That is the unfudged commitment the London and Dublin governments made publicly prior to the IRA cessation. It is the responsibility of the political representatives of all the Irish people to ensure that the British do not succeed in reneging on this commitment.

There is a compelling urgency about this task. If we fail to do this, if John Major digs deeper behind his irresponsible and impossible demand for an IRA surrender, then this phase of the peace process will end in despair and the hope born of years of hard work and risk will be lost.

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