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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRSTE

For: Andrew Patterson
Date: 26 August, 1993

cc ASI
AS
M. FURHAM
A/SEC C. HIGGINS
AMB. LINDSEY
AMB. WATSON
M. T. DAVEN
M. F. MURPHY
COUNCILORS M.
MR. B. McATHAN

PA(IRA)
ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

From: Derek Feely
Pages: 3

Ms. J. J. J. J.
PIA

"The IRA has been defeated" - Security Minister Sir John Wheeler
"Good Morning Ulster" Report, Radio Ulster,
Thursday, 26/8/93

Introduction: "The Security Minister Sir John Wheeler is completely out of touch with reality if he believes the IRA is beaten". That's the view of Nigel Dodds of the DUP who was commenting on a BBC Northern Ireland interview given by the Minister yesterday. In that interview Sir John Wheeler said the IRA had been defeated because its campaign had achieved nothing in 25 years. Sir John also said he didn't know if the IRA had a Commander-in-Chief. Well, in a moment we will be hearing from Nigel Dodds but first this is what the Security Minister had to say about the IRA.

Sir John Wheeler: They are already defeated. It's simply not winning. Look...

Interviewer: People continue to be killed, bombs continue to explode, Minister.

Sir John Wheeler: Look at the evidence of the last twenty-five years. What has been achieved? Yes, you're quite right that crimes can be committed. In a free and open society, people will always be able to kill other people if they are determined so to do.

Interviewer: Are you saying Minister, that the IRA can and will be defeated?

Sir John Wheeler: The IRA is already defeated.

Presenter: Sir John Wheeler. Well, Martin McGinley has been speaking to Nigel Dodds who said that if Sir John didn't change his attitude he should be replaced.

Nigel Dodds: To declare that the IRA has already been defeated stands reality on its head. I mean where has the Minister been over the last few weeks, months. We have bombs going off in the centre of Belfast, we have the Chief Constable not so long ago warning that the IRA posed a greater threat than ever, he pointed to the fact that they had access to enormous resources in terms of arms and bomb-making equipment and yet we have the man who is supposed to be in charge of Security in Northern Ireland saying that the IRA are already defeated. Well, I think that it shows and demonstrates how out of touch the Government is with reality in Northern Ireland and I think it's time that we had a Minister here who demonstrated that he had a grasp of reality and knew what the job was that needed to be done. And I think that it demonstrates the air of complacency that exists in the Northern Ireland Office, there's almost an acceptance of a certain level of violence and I think that really the Minister needs to reflect on what he has said and if that's his attitude, then he should be replaced by someone who realises that the IRA are far from being defeated.

Interviewer: But surely by saying that they were defeated he actually meant that they hadn't in any way achieved their objectives over the past twenty-five years. Would you accept that?

Sir John Wheeler: Yes, I mean, obviously the IRA have not achieved their objective of a united Ireland and they never will bomb or bludgeon the people of Northern Ireland into accepting a united Ireland. But the reality is that they are still capable of carrying on a vicious campaign of bombing and killing in Northern Ireland and we have the man who is supposed to be in charge of security in Northern Ireland

saying first of all he doesn't know whether the IRA has a Commander-in-Chief or not. Well, if he doesn't, he should know whether they have a Commander-in-Chief, he's the man in charge of Security. And then we have him saying that the IRA are already defeated. Well, with an attitude like that, that leads to complacency and I think that the Minister instead should be saying, no we have a very serious problem here, the IRA are far from being defeated, we must take every possible measure to defeat the IRA instead of sending out messages which everybody in Northern Ireland knows to be completely out of touch with reality.

Presenter: Nigel Dodds. The SDLP Chairman Mark Durkan has also been commenting on Sir John Wheeler's remarks. Mr. Durkan said that it was as daft and perhaps as dangerous to talk of the defeat of the IRA as it was for anyone to talk about a victory for the IRA.