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(27)

Possible reaction to Rev. Martin Smyth

- I think his remarks were thoughtful and constructive.
- The issues in question are profoundly serious for all of us. Rev. Martin Smyth's statement showed that he and his party are taking their political responsibilities seriously, and in a way which clearly rose above polemics or empty point-scoring.
- What he said on the difference between a total cessation of violence and tactical ceasefires makes complete sense, and it is a distinction the Irish Government would agree totally with.
- We must all seek to lay the ghost of violence and construct an exclusively peaceful, democratic approach to working out our differences.
- (Each atrocity serves only to highlight this basic truth. That is true of today's deplorable attack, which must be condemned utterly on all sides).
- His remarks encourage me to believe that the UUP, while defending strongly its own principles, will seek to play a constructive role in the process.
- That is very important since it must be clear to all that there can be no lasting or stable arrangements on this island if they fail to secure the consent of the Unionist community.

R. W. W. W.
(This is a comment to
the Irish Government)

13/10.

AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH
BÉAL FEIRTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT
BELFAST

FOR: Jean McManus

FROM: Aingéal O'Donoghue

PAGES: 3

Please copy immediately to Gerry Corr

Interview with the Rev. Martin Smyth on
Radio Ulster, 12 October, 1993

Interviewer: Moments earlier I asked Martin Smyth to reply to Nigel Dodd's comments that his comments were shocking and amazing.

Rev. Martin Smyth: I would have thought that the DUP were doing well in responding to questions without examining what was happening and quite frankly I am fascinated by that approach insofar as I understood that they recognise that if Sinn Fein and the IRA cease their violence they would have to be considered as a political party and part of the basic qualification is there must be a clear evidence that there is no longer a place for violence in politics in Northern Ireland.

Interviewer: But let's look at the timing of your comments Martin Smyth. The Unionist hackles have been raised by the Bume/Adams initiative which will be discussed in Dublin today, the DUP point out that you are giving credibility to Sinn Fein before the IRA have laid down their arms?

Rev. Martin Smyth: No, we have rightly spelled out the situation and I am amazed actually that there is that reaction. Of course, I appreciate that there are those who regularly say Unionists are a party of reaction and perhaps maybe that is the Democratic Unionist position. We have spelled out our position very clearly, when people are saying now the Middle East is getting sorted out, why not Northern Ireland, we are saying that the same

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when people are saying now the Middle East is getting sorted out, why not Northern Ireland, we are saying that the same terms that have been present in the Middle East are applicable here. In other words PLO had to move away from violence, there are other elements out there who are still involved in violence Hamas for example and secondly, the neighbouring Arab states had to recognise Israel's right to exist. We are saying the same thing in Northern Ireland, those who want a major step forward for peace, stability must recognise that you cannot use violence and terror as a political weapon and secondly, the people who freely and democratically choose by ballot box what they want, should be allowed to go down that road and be recognised by others who may disagree with them. I mean that's democracy, that's part of our whole constitutional history, if by vote people move in certain directions there should be a peaceful handover.

Interviewer: But even if you do invite Sinn Fein to a negotiating table, Sinn Fein are going to want to talk about a united Ireland, you say you won't even discuss that, so we are not really much further on are we?

Rev. Martin Smyth: We have said that within Northern Ireland because it is the people of Northern Ireland, not a party in Northern Ireland who will decide, it is the people of Northern Ireland and unless we live in the light of that hard reality we are not going to get anywhere and you will never bomb a majority of people into submission when they are convinced of the rightness of their cause and quite frankly socio-economically it's all there, the Irish Republic would not exist today as a modern state without the subvention from Europe, who's paying the bulk of that subvention, the British taxpayer.

Interviewer: But Martin Smyth, what's the point of even offering Sinn Fein a place in a negotiating table if you are not going to talk about what they want to discuss?

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Rev. Martin Smyth: We are saying that there is no place for them at a table as a political party if they are simply the protectness for terrorism and that was confirmed last week in a San Francisco Court where a Sinn Fein Councillor supported the IRA's violence...

Interviewer: Even if the IRA were to surrender all their weapons and Sinn Fein were to come to talks, you won't talk about what Sinn Fein regard as the central point, they want a united Ireland?

Rev. Martin Smyth: We are prepared to discuss realistically every issue but they must recognise that in that context when it goes to the ballot box the people of Northern Ireland will want to remain within the United Kingdom and therefore we have got to talk realistically and any political party will tell you that, you don't stay away from a political party because you disagree with them fundamentally, the Labour Party disagree fundamentally with the Tory Party, that doesn't say that they don't discuss, they don't have debates, they do. What we are saying categorically is that if Sinn Fein want to be a political party then they must eschew violence, I think that is a very logical position, I can't see why people are getting het-up over it and why now we have moved the game again by saying that since they want a united Ireland we will not discuss it with them. We have been prepared to discuss our position clearly and will continue to do so.