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ACTIVITY REPORT



Sinn Féin

~~Nuzcht reilais/News release~~

For immediate release: 4/3/96

Sinn Féin barred from talks

Sinn Féin President Gerry Adams this morning led a party delegation to Stormont to participate in the consultative process announced by the British and Irish governments last week in their joint communique. The Sinn Féin delegation included Vice President Pat Doherty, General Secretary Lucille Breathnach, Ard Chomhairle member Martin McGuinness, Gerry Kelly, Slobhan O'Hanlon, as well as a number of the party's Belfast Councillors. (In the last local Council elections Sinn Féin won more votes in Belfast than any other party including the UUP).

The Sinn Féin delegation were refused admittance to the conference building where the discussions are taking place.

Speaking after officials refused him entry Gerry Adams said: "Our intention in coming here this morning was to make a positive and constructive contribution to the consultative process. We also have a duty to assert the rights of those people who vote for our party and Sinn Féin represents somewhere between 35/40% of the nationalist section of our people in this statelet, as well as many more in the 26 counties.

A peace process if it is to be successful needs to be inclusive. I think it is a very sad irony that we, who have made a very definite contribution to initiating the process and to sustaining it, are being locked out, while the unionists who are boycotting venues and refusing to speak to the Irish government, are being rewarded for their refusal to talk.

This is all evidence of why we advised against an elective process."

Mr Adams called for the two governments to take a leadership role in moving the process forward. He said:

"It is imperative that in a situation where all of the parties will seek to set their own agenda that the two governments play a leadership

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~~Nuacht rianais~~ News release

role. Both governments have to take responsibility for guiding this process. What the British government has increasingly done is take ownership of the agenda and to subvert the process for their own very narrow purposes."

Mr Adams added:

"There is some media speculation that there are substantive discussions between Sinn Féin and Irish government officials. That is not the case. The last formal discussions were held last Thursday night. We have been in contact with them since but that should not be spun out as substantive contact or as a substitute for the rights of our party - it isn't."

Asked about meetings with officials in the consultative process Mr Adams said:

"We will wait for a joint formal invitation from the British and Irish governments and when we receive that we will consider it and as we have done so often before we will come to it positively.

There are a number of principles required in any peace process. One is inclusiveness, another is the removal of all preconditions and the third is an open agenda with everyone at the table and everything on the table."

Commenting on the decision of the US Administration to give him a visa Mr Adams said:

"I am very pleased to have my visa renewed and for it to have the same status as before and I commend President Clinton for that. I will go, as I always have done to make a very positive contribution and to inform people of the situation here.

Concluding Mr Adams said:

"We have a right, not for any egotistical or party political reasons, but because those who vote for us are not second class citizens, to represent our people on the same basis as all others. We will tolerate nothing less.

All of the other parties received invitations to be part of the consultative process. We expect that courtesy to be extended to us also.

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