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Reference Code: 2021/50/50

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Sinn Fein Access to Castle Buildings

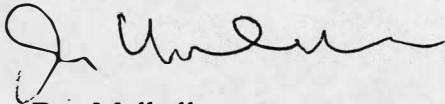
Eamonn Mallie tells me that the NIO are claiming that Robert Campton was speaking with the authority of both Governments when he denied Sinn Fein access to Castle Buildings yesterday. He asked if I could confirm that this was the case.

While acknowledging that Mr Compton did not have a mandate to speak for the Irish Government, I made it plain that we were not making an issue of this because the main thrust of what he had told Sinn Fein, i.e. that they did not have a meeting, was correct and in accordance with Government policy. As yesterday's consultations were at Ministerial level, there was no role in them for Sinn Fein under present circumstances.

As regards access to the building, this was a secondary matter. While the talks process is jointly sponsored by the two Governments, the building is under the management of the NIO and Mr Campton, as the relevant administrator, was the one whose task it was to deal with the Sinn Fein delegation at the gate.

I pointed out that Sinn Fein continued to have opportunities for contact with the Government at official level.

I propose to use the above line in response to any further media enquiries of this nature. .



Dan Mulhall
5 March 1996

cc Second Secretary, Joint Secretary, Mr Cooney., Ms Manahan Leslie.

u Second Secretary
Joint Secretary
Counsellor A-1

SINN FEIN TURNED AWAY FROM CASTLE BUILDINGS - 4 MARCH 1996

ROBERT CAMPTON (TAU):

I'm afraid I can't give you access to the building this morning. You have no meeting arranged with either the UK or the Irish Governments. If you want to submit a request for a meeting with officials, it will be considered in due course, on its merits.

ADAMS:

I know you're in a fairly difficult position. You have been sent out to deliver the message. I think that what we have to make very very clear is that there was to be a consultative process this morning. It was to be sponsored and hosted by the two Governments. Even those parties which received an invitation, received an invitation only from the British Government and I think, furthermore, that one gets some notion of what really this is about. That we who represent a very substantial number of people on both states of this island are being denied our entitlement to play the positive role in the peace process that we played throughout and even before the peace process.

CAMPTON:

The situation is as I have described, Mr Adams. If you wish to submit a request for a meeting with officials it will be considered on...

ADAMS:

Which officials are you referring to? Are you representing the British Government?

CAMPTON:

Either the British or the Irish Government officials...

ADAMS:

So you're now representing both Governments...

CAMPTON:

I have been asked to make that point to you this morning. If you wish to submit a request for a meeting with either sets of officials it will be considered on its merits.

ADAMS:

What we want to do is to go into the building, to go into the venue.

CAMPTON:

I am not permitted to allow you into the venue.

ADAMS:

We are being denied the right to go in and talk about peace?

CAMPTON:

If you submit a request for a meeting with officials, that will be considered on its merits. That's the situation.

ADAMS:

We are being denied the right to make a contribution to peace.

CAMPTON:

I have given you the message that if you wish to have a meeting with officials then, if you submit that request, it will be considered on its merits.

ADAMS:

Well, can I say, and I mean this is all very theatrical and televisually I suppose of some benefit to the media here, but can I say that we are a serious political party, that we represent the people in both states in this island, that it's impossible to build the peace process unless it is inclusive. That we have played a role in shaping the peace process in the first instance and in sustaining it against all the odds in the second. It is a matter of deep regret that the two Governments are treating those who we represent as second class citizens. So I thank you both. I know you are only acting here as messenger boys. I know that you probably

don't like doing what you're doing. I do note that you say that you're representing both Governments...

CAMPTON:

Yes...

ADAMS:

...which is a strange, a strange commitment from the Irish Government, but however, that's the way it is. Thankyou.

CAMPTON:

Thankyou very much.

ADAMS:

Can I say first of all that 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 Fein represents somewhere between 35 and 45% of the nationalist voters in this statelet and we represent voters also in the rest of the island. The peace process, if it is to be successful, needs to be inclusive. I think it is also a very sad irony that we who have made a very definite contribution to initiating the process and also to sustaining it, are being locked out. And I know there is a strange irony about republicans being locked out of Stormont while the Unionists who are boycotting this consultative phase are being rewarded for their refusal to talk and to be part of all of this. And it is also evidence of why we advised against an elective process. The two Governments have to play leadership roles in this. Also, and I just say this in passing, this was to be a consultative process sponsored by both Governments. The invitations which went to those who got invitations, came only from the British. The fact that Dick Spring was going to be here, the Tanaiste, was a footnote tagged on at the end, as was the British document dealing with the Building Blocks proposals which were rejected months ago by the Irish Government. So I think that in all of this we need to ponder and we come here, as I said at the beginning, to make a constructive contribution to the search for peace. How can that happen if we are being excluded?

Q: Did you ask either Government in advance for talks today?

ADAMS:

No, when last we talked to the Irish Government officials, which was last Thursday night, we told them that our intention was to contribute to the peace process and also to uphold the rights of those who vote for us and that we have an entitlement to be here. And can I also clear up a little matter here. There is some newspaper speculation and some briefing of television journalists that there are substantive discussions between Irish Government officials and Sinn Fein. That is not the case. The last formal discussion we had with Irish Government officials were myself and Rita O'Hare last Thursday night. We have been in contact with them since, but that should not be spun out, or be allowed to be spun out, as in any way a substitute for the rights of those who vote for our party.

Q: Will you take up the offer of meetings with officials?

ADAMS:

I think we will wait for a joint formal invitation from the British and the Irish Governments and when we receive that we will consider it. And as we have done consistently, we will do so in a positive spirit.

Q: You're not going to go begging are you?

ADAMS:

Well, it isn't a matter of begging - I think that language Denis, as you know, is evocative. There are a number of principles which are required: one is inclusiveness; another one is the removal of all pre-conditions; the third one is an open agenda with everyone at the table and every issue on the table. Now, some of you people were here when Brian Faulkner was here. Some of you were here when people like Willie Whitelaw were here. Some were here when James Prior was here. What's the difference today? The reality is that the key to what John Hume and I presented to people with, years ago, was that both Governments have to take responsibility for guiding this process. What the British Government have done is to increasingly take ownership of an agenda and to subvert it for their own very narrow purposes. So the both Governments - and Dublin cannot acquiesce in this - both Governments have to be part of what's moving it forward and they have to play a real leadership role.

Q: Would you support elections here?

ADAMS:

Let's not go for hypothetical cherry-picking. If you wanted any proof of the absurdity of an elective process as an entry into negotiations - and remember, even if the Governments haven't decided that against the advice of Sinn Fein, even if they had then decided on the process - who is going to argue the nationalist position? The SDLP versus the rest? And Dublin already agreed that the decision will be taken by the British? So, we will judge all of this when it emerges. We aren't even being given the right to put forward our position on what type of process - if any - would be the most positive or constructive.

Q: How do you plan to use your visa?

ADAMS:

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

Q: What do you think of Mr Hume's support for a list system election?

ADAMS:

I think what Mr Hume said, and he has repeated it increasingly and it isn't up to me to speak for him, that he was opposed to elections, but if there were going to be elections this was the one which he preferred.

Q: If he supports it could you live with it also?

ADAMS:

What we have to do is we have to have the opportunity to put forward our views on these matters, along with all the other parties, to the two Governments.

Q: Michael Ancram said this morning that it was up Sinn Fein to make the first move. If you don't ask for a meeting with officials, won't you have excluded yourselves from the business of the next 10 days?

ADAMS:

First of all we have a right, not for any egotistical or even party political reason, but because those who vote for us will not be treated like second class citizens and we will not allow that to happen. The other parties received invitations to be part of the consultative process. We expect that courtesy to be extended to those who vote for our party also.

Q: Do you expect to be able to talk to US officials at some level?

ADAMS:

I have been talking to American officials and I intend to continue to do so.

Q: But they took away your right to fundraise?

ADAMS:

In deference to the difficulties facing the President, I agreed not to apply for fund-raising on this trip.

Q: Now that you have been excluded won't it make it difficult to go the IRA for a reinstatement of the ceasefire?

McGUINNESS:

I think that within the broad republican community, people will draw their own conclusions from what has happened here today. I think it does have to be said that what we have seen today will add to the alienation which exists within the broad nationalist community about the process which is taking place. If people are attempting to tell us that what happened today is democracy, then it's a strange idea of democracy. It is certainly not all-party peace negotiations.