

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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faxed PST; PSM; PSMS delivering 5pm 22/10
22/10
4:45pm Mr. Teahon
Mr. Dalton
Dr. Mansergh

Secret

Mitchell Review: State of Play Friday Afternoon, 22 October 1999

1. George Mitchell briefed the British side and ourselves on his separate discussions with Sinn Féin, the UUP and the SDLP today. At each meeting, he laid out orally the approach he has been considering to break the impasse (ie Trimble to live with the institutions for two weeks without a public commitment on decommissioning, and Sinn Féin to use their influence during this period to enable de Chastelain to report positively).

Sinn Féin

2. Sinn Féin left Mitchell with the clear impression that it would be very difficult for them. They did not, however, reject the approach, saying that they needed "to think about it" very carefully. They strongly opposed the idea of de Chastelain calling on the paramilitaries to decommission, saying that would be counter-productive. They would also be opposed to a high-profile role for de Chastelain, preferring his involvement to be much lower key (whereas Trimble would wish to put the de Chastelain role in the plan up in lights).

3. Mitchell said that McGuinness gave him "five minutes" on the dangerous implications for them of the Naul arrests (as he did to me this morning). Mitchell was taken also by Adams' sombre warning that it was "somebody like that 14 year-old" arrested in the incident who "will get me".

4. I should add that Sinn Féin told me today that they have been working on further re-drafts of the statement they would make. I told them that the language they have in mind is better, but would still not be enough for Trimble;

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he simply had to have an assurance about a date. (Gerry Adams has now given me privately a copy of the latest draft, which is attached; it has, in fact, in my view, some quite significant additions, which are underlined. He has not yet decided when to play it in.)

UUP

5. Trimble and Empey reacted cautiously to Mitchell's outline, but also did not reject it out of hand. Their main initial concern related to time. They also saw no way that the Review could be completed tomorrow and emphasised that more time was needed. Encouragingly, they indicated that they wished to engage with Sinn Féin directly on the approach.

6. In offering initial comments, Trimble said that they could not settle for less than what was in the *Way Forward* - "we would be laughed at". He and Empey remained of the view that they needed a start to the process of decommissioning (as distinct from a start to actual decommissioning) to take place before devolution. Mitchell pointed out to them that this would go beyond the *Way Forward*.

7. They expressed real doubts about whether they could survive for two weeks without advance public certainty that decommissioning was going to happen. However, they provided helpful and interesting clarification on what the precise party rules were on the calling of an emergency meeting of the full Ulster Unionist Council (at which Trimble could be challenged by his opponents in the event of accepting a plan that went beyond stated party policy). While a Motion calling for such an emergency meeting could be tabled at any time once it had obtained the support of 80 Members, the actual timing of the meeting itself was at the discretion of the party leadership, within an outside limit of three weeks from the date of tabling.

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SDLP

8. Mitchell said that the SDLP, especially Mallon, were very supportive of his proposed approach, which they felt was about the right ball-park. Mallon told him that he felt nothing else had a chance of success.

Next Steps/Timing of End of Review

9. In light of these meetings, Mitchell has been further revising his timing plans in terms of drawing the Review to closure. He has told Trimble that he is prepared to give it a limited number of extra days. However, he has made clear to him that the credibility of the process requires that the Review has to wrapped up by the end of next week at the latest.

10. Taking into account the need for the parties to reflect on his proposed approach, and personal commitments which require him to be in New York on Tuesday next, he is now considering adjourning the session tomorrow, resuming on Wednesday of next week and then staying at it until matters have been drawn to a conclusion one way or the other.

11. In the meantime, he will continue the discussions this evening and tomorrow. He now intends to meet General de Chastelain briefly before seeing Sinn Féin, the SDLP and the UUP together at 5.00. On the departure of Séamus Mallon to Dublin (for the SDLP dinner-dance), he will continue with the UUP and Sinn Féin, aiming to work until about 9.30 or 10.00 tonight.

12. The Senator currently intends to see Sinn Féin, the SDLP and UUP again together tomorrow morning at about 9.30. Between 11.00 and 1.00 he will see the four smaller parties individually (to give them a sense of ownership). There

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will then be a roundtable, which he would hope to wrap up at about 3.00 tomorrow afternoon. He is very anxious that his timing plans not be revealed before tomorrow's session.

Belfast Telegraph Poll

13. I attach information we have received about the findings of a *Belfast Telegraph* opinion poll which is to be published next Wednesday (coincidentally, as the Review will be resuming). Even allowing for the limitations of polls in the Northern context, the indications of continued underlying support for the Agreement, anxiety about the failure of the Review, and an increased willingness to back a compromise solution to the current impasse are all encouraging.

Dermot Gallagher

22 October 1999

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Without prejudice. Elements of a Sinn Féin statement - 4th draft

Sinn Féin are totally committed to the implementation of the Good Friday Agreement in all its aspects. We believe that the wholehearted implementation of the Agreement has the capacity to transform the existing situation through constructive and dynamic political development.

It is an unprecedented opportunity to start afresh. An opportunity to put behind us the failures, the tragedy and the suffering of the past.

There is no doubt that we are entering into the final stages of the resolution of the conflict.

The IRA cessation which has now been in place for a total of almost 4 years, represents an important and positive contribution by the IRA to the resolution of the conflict. IRA guns are silent and the Sinn Féin leadership are confide nt that the IRA remain committed to the objective of a permanent peace.

By providing an effective political alternative we can remove the potential for conflict. We are determined that conflict must be for all of us now - including all armed groups - a thing of the past, over, done with and gone.

There has been a particular focus on arms. This issue is addressed directly in the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin accepts that decommissioning is an essential part of the peace process. All parties to the Agreement have an obligation to help achiev e decommissioning within the time frame set out in the Good Friday Agree ment . Sinn Féin are committed to discharging our responsibilities in this regard. We want to see and will work with the other parties to achieve early progress in that regard.

The Good Friday Agreement makes clear that the context required for its resolution is the implementation of the overall settlement, using the mechanism of the de Chastelain Commission.

Sinn Féin are convinced that it is only through the full implementation

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the Agreement, including the operation of its institutions and discharging our collective responsibility in regards to its terms, that the issue of arms under the aegis of the de Chastelain Commission as set out in the Agreement, will be finally and satisfactorily settled.

Sinn Fein has a total and absolute commitment to exclusively peaceful and democratic means. It is our commitment to pursue our objectives by purely political means in accordance with the Good Friday Agreement. Sinn Féin is totally committed to non-violence. We are totally opposed to punishment attacks. We believe that exclusively democratic and peaceful means are the way to resolve differences on political issues. For this reason we are totally opposed to any use of force or threat of force by others for any political purpose.

In the Executive the two Sinn Féin Ministers will make and will honour the pledge of office including the commitment to non-violence and exclusively peaceful and democratic means. We fully accept that any member of that Executive who dishonoured his or her Pledge of Office, including the commitment to non-violence and exclusively democratic and peaceful means, would, under the terms of section 25 of Strand One of the Agreement, be expelled from the Executive.

All sections of our people have suffered profoundly in this conflict. That suffering is a matter of deep regret but makes the difficult process of removing conflict all the more imperative. Sinn Féin wish to work with, not against, the unionists and recognises this as yet another imperative. For Sinn Féin co-operation and accommodation is the objective of this process.

We reiterate our total commitment to doing everything in our power to maintain the peace process and to removing the gun forever from the politics of our country.

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