

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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To: HQ
For: Secretary O'Ceallaigh
cc: Ray Bassett

From: Belfast
From: Joint Secretary

Subj: Trimble's decision to go for it

Steven King told me this morning that David Trimble's decision to go for the Hillsborough deal and to persuade the UUP to back him in this had lifted spirits at party headquarters and created a much more positive attitude overall. The feeling is that the decision to postpone the UUC meeting for a week was the right one - they were too demoralised to face into what was going to be a very difficult meeting with only a day or two's preparation.

King said that they will hit the ground running on Monday, speaking and writing to delegates, the media etc. in a spirit of calm, quiet persuasion regarding what is on offer and the reality of the choice facing the party. It is not intended to travel to different locations as that would provide an opportunity for demonstration and disruption. I referred to the disappointingly negative piece by Barry White in today's Irish Independent ("A Deal too far for the party grassroots"), as well as to the less-than-supportive response of the Presbyterian Moderator, John Lockington. (I also took the opportunity of asking if there was anything we could do to be supportive at this time. King said he'd check with Trimble and come back on that.)

I had earlier spoken with Seán Farren who feels that what has been a difficult week for everyone has ended quite well. The mood is up, he said, if there is strong and good leadership by Trimble. Farren agreed that Trimble's calm performance earlier on BBC Radio's "Good Morning Ulster" was the way to go (see below). Farren mentioned that a UUP official had said to him yesterday evening that they desperately needed a positive

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outcome - and that they needed the flags and RUC name controversies like a hole in the head (but had had to stick with it).

Farren feels it will be important for Trimble to be able to establish that Ramaphosa, Ahtisaari and de Chastelain are people of the greatest stature and integrity who can be relied upon. When I referred to Lockington's unhelpful contribution, Farren said he would have a word with John Dunlop to see if he or the SDLP could help by clarifying and confirming the profound importance and seriousness of the IRA statement.

Trimble

Trimble's performance on this morning's GMU was impressively calm and reasoned, emphasising that the IRA statement of 6 May breaks new ground in committing the IRA unequivocally to putting their arms completely and verifiably beyond use ("they will"). So, as Trimble put it, let's "put the republican movement to the test." He concluded that he would not succumb to, nor engage in, "emotional blackmail" but that he was convinced that the good sense of the Ulster Unionist Party would prevail. (Full text being forwarded separately.)

Mandelson, who also spoke in the programme, urged Unionists to support a return to devolved government, and stressed the choice between what's on offer and the risks attaching to any alternative. Mallon emphasised the need for Trimble to sell the package in a very vigorous and robust way. The "in-betweeners" need to be persuaded, he said. Martin McGuinness spoke constructively of the need for "a click" within the overall process to the effect that this is the best way forward. Taking the gun out of Irish politics was always going to be the most difficult task. Rejectionists on all sides had to be faced down, he said, with all of the pro-Agreement parties joining together in common purpose "to provide a real life for our people."

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