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Mr. Ivor Curran

PS to Min. Dr. T. Moffatt.

@ 6714904

To: Dr Albert Jordan, Dr Albert Jordan  
cc:  
From: Eilish O'Sullivan  
Date: 02/10/98 12:47:08  
Subject: Transcript as requested.

Mr. Kinnear happy to discuss aspects with Minister if desired.

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To: Eilish O'Sullivan  
cc: Geraldine Butler  
From: Geraldine Butler  
Date: 02/10/98 12:39:37  
Subject:

**Transcript of Press Conference  
The Taoiseach and John Hume and Seamus Mallon  
Government Buildings  
Thursday 1st October 1998**

**Taoiseach:**

Well ladies and gentlemen both myself, John Hume and Seamus Mallon and our colleagues from the SDLP have had a discussion for the last 90 minutes, I think we are all agreed that we must keep firmly focused on the broad public interest, which is the implementation of the Agreement and all the aspects of the Agreement. We are concerned that, perhaps we need to get far more momentum into the situation, but what we want to see is that all aspects of the Agreement as we have been discussing them that everybody is doing that and that we can proceed without delay or stalling and this means establishing the institutions set out in the Agreement without trying to alter their terms and in our discussions today we are of the view that everybody has a responsibility and an obligation to build confidence and we need to hear from all the parties associated and all the departments and associated organisations that they are committed to the implementation of their obligations under the Good Friday Agreement. No one should be holding back, waiting for others to make the first move and there are different time scales set out in the Agreement and we are all signed up to those timescales and everybody should be moving to start fulfilling their obligations without waiting to be pressed by others. We today have a very good exchange of views between the Government and the SDLP, we are clear of the timescales, we are clear of the work programme and we have clear understandings of where both the Government and the SDLP are in trying to reach these various agreements. Most of the people, a great majority of the people in Northern Ireland want this Agreement to work, it is the people's agreement, it's not the Government's agreement, it's not the political parties agreements, the people have adopted the

agreement and the peace dividend and the political progress for everybody depends on moving forward and there is no use in people taking up old defensive and negative positions which the Agreement has made outdated. We have an obligation to the people and both the Government and the SDLP are determined that we will adhere to those obligations and those commitments to the people and that we will honour their support in the Agreement. Nothing which is fulfilling the Agreement involves surrender on anybody's part, what we are doing is implementing the Agreement, it's about a shared commitment to a better future and certainly I am heartened today that as far as the Government and the SDLP are concerned that our political imperative is to see this Agreement implemented in all it's aspects and we are absolutely clear what we have to do to achieve that.

**John Hume:**

We very much welcome the meeting that we have had with the Taoiseach and the Minister for Foreign Affairs today and we have also agreed of course that we will not only maintain regular contact, but meet on a regular basis in order to carry out the objectives that we were engaged in today and the objectives that we are talking about is doing everything in our power to ensure that the Agreement is implemented in all it's details and in doing that of course it's sometimes necessary to remind people that all we are doing is implementing the will of the people so overwhelmingly expressed and so democratically expressed and telling those who are holding back the implementation of the Agreement that they are behaving in a fairly anti-democratic fashion. But as I say we look forward to this continuing work, both at contact level and at meeting levels such as today and we will be doing everything in our power together with the Government to ensure that the Agreement in all it's aspects is fully implemented.

**Journalist:**

Taoiseach do you see a danger that David Trimble might even be toppled in his own party if there is not some movement on decommissioning .....

**Taoiseach:**

I have no information that he has any difficulty of that kind within his party, clearly there are pressures within his party, but not to that extent. I think that we have to make progress on all aspects and we are quite clear from both Government's points of view and these discussions today with the SDLP that we do not want to be finding ourselves into obstacles on any one area, what we have to do is work, all of us and we have all an obligation to do this, and we are all prepared to play whatever part we can to surmounting whatever difficulties that come up, but the only way that we can do that and the only consistent way we can do that is to implement the Good Friday Agreement.

**John Hume:**

And I think we should remind people who are raising this issue of decommissioning all the time, that when we say as we have said we are totally committed to doing everything in our power to implement all aspects of the Agreement that that includes and the Agreement is very clear on this a commitment by all parties to achieving total, total disarmament in Northern Ireland, that's when we talk of implementing the Agreement in all its detail that is clearly strongly included, because no one should be in any doubt that we want to take the gun completely out of the situation in Northern Ireland.

**Journalist:**

But is the question about guns, there are guns and ..... it's a question of when surely?

**John Hume:**

Well I think that anyone who is rationally looking at the current situation would see an answer to your question of when that the ceasefires have been there and not only have been strongly welcomed by the people, but have transformed the situation. In other words that the violence has ceased and that those who have declared that it's ceased obviously are holding to their commitment. Secondly anyone once the institutions are put in place, all parties who participate in those institutions, the representatives of those parties will be totally committed through their pledge of office to maintaining the Mitchell Principles, so that if anyone and anyone associated with them departs from maintaining the Mitchell Principles, those people will be automatically excluded from the institutions and of course in addition to that and most importantly of all by agreement of all the parties the International Commission is there to deal with the whole question of disarmament and this strange word decommissioning.

**Journalist:**

Taoiseach you said there that you want to hear from all parties, can organisations associated with ..... and this morning on RTE Radio John Hume said I think a gesture from the Republican Movement at this stage might break the logjam. Do you think it is time for the Republican Movement to make that gesture?

**Taoiseach:**

Well I think it would be helpful if the Republican Movement reiterated their support for the terms of the Good Friday Agreement in relation to the issue that's creating some difficulties.

**Journalist:**

Do you think it needs to go beyond an actual statement,.....

- **Taoiseach:**

Well in terms of making life easier for all of us that would be the ideal resolution, but I think we all know that that's not something we are going to see in the next few weeks, but I do not see why it would be a difficulty in expressing absolute support for the fact that there has to be decommissioning within the two year period of the Agreement.

**Journalist:**

Is there any progress being made ..... in terms of the institutions, particularly the establishment of cross border bodies, what their terms of reference would be .....

**John Hume:**

Well you could take it for granted that that was central to our discussion today and we would be very happy with the progress that we made in our discussions with the Government on those very issues.

**Taoiseach:**

I think on that issue can I just say from the Government's point of view, we have not allowed or have not wasted out time over recent weeks. There has been an enormous amount of work on the North South institutions and the implementation bodies and all of the work surrounding that and without totally signing off on it, I think from our point of view we would be ready to finalise all of these matters in a matter of days if we were in a position to do so.

**Journalist:**

Mr. Trimble and Mr. Adams met this morning ..... did you get a chance to inform yourselves about that?

**Seamus Mallon:**

Yes. I have informed myself. I heard what both said after the meeting as well, so I have two pieces of information, the informal and the formal, I believe the problem is there, that it will be dealt with and if I can put it in these terms, just imagine two weeks time, three weeks time, a months time a news flash which said the Good Friday Agreement has collapsed, what would the reaction be in this country, what would it be in Britain, what would it be in the United States, does anybody imagine that given the Governmental input to that Agreement and the input of the parties and the risks that we are taking that this Agreement is going to be allowed to collapse on this one single issue, it simply isn't , this matter will be resolved, it may not be resolved to the liking of Mr. Trimble or to the liking of Mr. Adams, but resolved it will be and the entire Agreement will be implemented in the speediest and most effective way, because that is what the Agreement says we must do and we all stand by that Agreement.

**Journalist:**

Is that not wishful thinking?

**Seamus Mallon:**

That is not wishful thinking I give that as a commitment from the entire political process. How could we even consider allowing an opportunity like this to collapse when in effect the future of everybody on this island, North and South is depending upon the working of this Agreement.

**Taoiseach:**

And I wholeheartedly agree with that.

**Journalist:**

..... has your own relationship being damaged with Mr. Trimble by the decommissioning problems, can it be repaired?

**John Hume:**

Of course it can be repaired. I believe that politics is about opposing opinions, starting to interact and work together, that's what the Agreement is about. — Unionism and Nationalism working together and we will have disagreements as we have on this issue and there will be other disagreements, the very essence of the Good Friday Agreement is that we have a means of dealing with those disputes and dealing with them in political terms. I believe yes we can do that, we will continue to do that, but we all must remember that there is only one text that which was written on Good Friday, nobody's interpretation of it, no additions to it, no subtractions from it, the Agreement in it's integrity and it's entirety.

**Journalist:**

Taoiseach last week you suggested that some kind of publically agreed timetable might be the way to break the impasse, is that still your position?

**Taoiseach:**

Well we have to break the impasse and I agree totally with what Seamus Mallon has said and we have to look positively, I cannot be sure of what way we can do that. I think it is our obligation as I have said to try to work to find a way of dealing with this issue and we will find a way of dealing with it, a timescale which I mentioned of course did not find acceptance with some people, other people had difficulties with other solutions, but I think we have to keep working at it till we find the way that can move on and on the other side of that, which I am confident that we will get to, on the other side of that we very speedily have to work to the timescales in the Agreement and that is why today and I just want to be absolutely clear on this in case people think we are just talking about one issue, today by and large we were talking about one issue, we were talking about the issues of the

work on the institutions and finalising as much as we can of the work to make sure that the institutions when we get into that detail on them can be quickly resolved. I do not see a position where we will spend other than a matter of days finalising the work in the institutions, we need to get into that quickly and we are certainly ready to do it and I know from the Government point of view and I know that the SDLP are.

**John Hume:**

And timescales are already central to the Agreement. October 31st is a target date, February is a target date and two years is a timescale set out to do certain things, but all of those are in the Agreement, so in working to get the Agreement in the first place most of the parties involved were aware that we had to have a timetable and that timetables are the way of making sure you get things done.

**ENDS.**