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Government continue to turn a blind eye to collusion – Ó Caoláin

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Speaking in the Dáil this evening Sinn Féin TD and Dáil leader Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin reminded the Taoiseach of the commitment he made to the house that a full-scale debate on collusion would be held following the publication of the report of Patrick McEntee SC into the Garda and Government investigation of the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of 1974.

Deputy Ó Caoláin said:

"Despite publishing the McEntee report April 2007, the government's long awaited debate is only taking place this week. This has been especially disappointing and frustrating for the families of victims of collusion. The form of the debate is unsatisfactory as there is no motion and no proposal for action.

"I have to say it is also frustrating in the extreme that this debate has been given a title that does not mention the word collusion. The investigations by Justice Barron, the reports of the Joint Oireachtas Committee and the inquiry of Patrick McEntee were not, as the title states vaguely, on 'violent incidents arising from the conflict in Northern Ireland'.

"They were on attacks, including mass murders, where British state collusion with unionist paramilitaries was strongly indicated.

"Let it be said that every single death in the conflict was a tragedy. No family's grief counts less than any other and there should never be a hierarchy of victims. However during the conflict the British government tried to convince the world that it was a peacekeeper, a policeman, a neutral force keeping the warring sides apart. It tried to mask its central role in the conflict. It was for this reason that it resorted so extensively to collusion.

"To the shame of successive Irish governments they co-operated to a great extent with the British government in its so-called security strategies. They turned a blind eye to collusion. British agents worked within the gardai. There was

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open co-operation with the RUC during the worst phase of its repression against the nationalist community in the Six Counties.

"This is the reality which many in this House, now as in the past, are unwilling to state.

"Under-stated as it was the McEntee report highlighted a massive failure on the part of this State to properly investigate the Dublin and Monaghan bombings of May 1974. The report again exposed the refusal of the British authorities to co-operate with a Commission of inquiry established by the Oireachtas.

"Prior to the publication of the McEntee Report we in Sinn Féin published a Dáil motion on collusion that was drafted in consultation with groups such as the Pat Finucane Centre, the Justice for Eddie Fullerton Campaign, Justice for the Forgotten and Relatives for Justice. Such a motion should have formed the basis for this debate.

"Both the British and Irish governments have failed to establish the inquiries repeatedly sought by relatives seeking truth and justice.

"It is now nearly two years since the All-Party Dáil motion of 8th March 2006 which called for the immediate establishment of a full, independent, public judicial inquiry into the murder of Pat Finucane. We are still waiting.

"This Bill if passed would not only jeopardise the ability of any future tribunal to uncover the truth surrounding the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and the murders of Seamus Ludlow, Cllr. Eddie Fullerton and Martin Doherty amongst others. It would also undermine the cases of all those in the Six Counties who are seeking inquiries into state collusion.

"This Bill would effectively give the government power over whether to establish a Tribunal of Inquiry at all, its members and crucially its terms of reference. It would also effectively give the government the power to suspend or dissolve a Tribunal for unlimited reasons and to prevent the publication of a Tribunal's report.

"I want to repeat Sinn Féin's demand for the Taoiseach to hold a special summit meeting with the British Prime Minister solely focused on the issue of collusion. The Taoiseach should create such an opportunity to demand of the British government that they provide access to all the original documents relating to the acts of collusion carried out in this jurisdiction that I have cited and indeed to the whole record of collusion in their possession. The search for truth and justice is far from over." CRÍOCH

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