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Barry Cowan interview with Danny Morrison,
Radio Ulster, 9 February 1987

(Morrison was interviewed in the context of a piece on the UFF bombs in Dublin and Donegal).

Interviewer: Are you saying that there are people in the political arena, people who at the moment are not banned under Section 31, who ought to be banned because they are promoting violence?

Morrison: No, I don't think they should be banned and that would be a misinterpretation of what I am saying. What I was trying to draw attention to was the fact that the criteria for banning Sinn Fein is that Sinn Fein can see the justification for the IRA's armed struggle in the six counties. Now what we're saying is that if that criteria is to be applied to those loyalist politicians who refuse to condemn the use of violence for political ends, namely, those who refuse to condemn the UDA planting these bombs in Donegal and Dublin, then surely they too should be banned although we don't want to see anyone censored.

Interviewer: But I have to bring you back again to this distinction and it's not a very fine distinction, a very broad distinction between condoning and condemning. Now you as Sinn Fein condone the activities of the IRA, that is surely very different from a refusal to condemn which is perhaps what we're seeing among some loyalist politicians.

Morrison: Well, perhaps you could explain to me the difference. I'm sure that the listeners can't see any real difference.

Interviewer: You as Sinn Fein actively promote IRA violence, do you not?

Morrison: No, we don't.

Interviewer: Well you believe that the IRA is right in carrying out bombing attacks.

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Morrison: I believe not just that the IRA is correct in resisting British rule in the North of Ireland but that the British people would be correct in resisting German rule if Hitler had got past the Channel Islands or that the people of Vietnam were correct in resisting the American invasion of their country. So I mean ours is a position which is also shared by many politicians all over the world.

Interviewer: But it has to be said though that the DUP and the Official Unionist Party do not have armed military wings.

Morrison: But they do support the use..., you see, what you're saying is that there is not a tangible relationship between those organisations and the UDA and in terms of a power structure or a military connection or hierarchy that is the same, exactly the same for Sinn Fein and the IRA. They're two separate, distinct organisations with separate constitutions and the relationship between them is that Sinn Fein is in solidarity with the struggle of resistance.

Interviewer: But you are the man who coined the phrase 'the armalite in one hand and the ballot paper in the other'.

Morrison: Yes.

Interviewer: And that surely implies that the two things go hand in hand. Your support for violence is well known, well documented and you don't deny it.

Morrison: No, what I mean by that phrase is that political struggle and armed struggle can be complementary and I don't see any contradiction in that.

Interviewer: But as you will recognise from a study of orders issued under Section 31 of the Broadcasting Act, those relate specifically to organisations identified as being involved in violent activities. They're very specific: the Red Hand Commando, the IRA, Sinn Fein, INLA, UDA and so on are all banned

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from appearing. Are you not surely suggesting that there is a causal relationship between let's say the DUP and the activities of the UFF.

Morrison: I think that there is, most certainly, in that the activities of both are aimed at preventing a resolution of the political conflict in this island. There is no difference in terms of what Paisley is trying to achieve and what the UFF is trying to achieve, no difference whatsoever.

Interviewer: So what is the end result then. You say you don't want to see.. although you say that the loyalist politicians who refuse to condemn the attack should also be banned, that's a kind of code word for saying 'actually what we want is an end to Section 31'.

Morrison: Of course. I made it quite clear at the end of my statement. What I'm saying is that there should be no... the people of the 26 counties ... I mean I am quite curious to see how Rhonda Paisley acquits herself on the RTE programme and I think the people of the 26 counties are entitled to hear her point of view. What I think is unfair is that the people of the 26 counties can't hear the republican point of view as a result of Section 31.

Interviewer: Could I ask you a final question? Do you condemn those who planted the firebombs in Ballybofey and Letterkenny?

Morrison: I think it would be a hypocritical position for me to take to actually condemn the use of force to achieve a political end. I think that how the loyalists conduct their campaign.. it certainly.. I consider it to be very, very dangerous for example in one case putting poison amongst foodstuffs where anybody, children, could be, could have taken the poison in those that were planted in the Dunnes Stores. Seven people were almost killed in Castlefin as a result of the firebombs and the campaign largely in terms of Lisburn for example where 160 innocent Catholic families have been driven from their homes and

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where 12 or 13 Catholics have been shot since the signing of the Hillsborough Agreement.

Interviewer: But you don't condemn that.

Morrison: In terms of condemn, I don't know what condemn means. It doesn't really mean anything. It's empty rhetoric.

Interviewer: Are you against it?

Morrison: Of course I am opposed to it. Absolutely. I don't understand the meaning of this word condemn. It's so much bandied about that it has become meaningless.