

Mr. McCartney's speech
at Forum 6/6/97.

ROBERT McCARTNEY QC MP
UNITED KINGDOM UNIONIST - NORTH DOWN



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Forum General -
cc Pst/Sir J Fell Ref Forum 97J
cc. Mr. Thomas
cc. Mr. Stephas
cc. Mr. Watkins
cc. Mr. Hill
cc. Mr. Carson ✓
cc. Mr. MacCabe
cc. Mr. Johnston

Mr. Chairman,

I rise to propose the Motion standing in the name of the UK Unionist
Party.

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Mr. Chairman, the Prime Minister in making a seminal speech on his
policy for Northern Ireland within two weeks of his Party's entry into
government, underlines the importance which it attributes to the northern
Ireland issue. It is, as he stated:-

*"Not a party political game or even a serious debate
about a serious run of the mill issue. It is about life
and death for people here."*

I am sure it is the wish of all present that neither he nor his government
ever forget that sentiment.

Central to the Prime Minister's speech was the theme of a fair and lasting
political settlement based on the will and consent of the people here. It
was a theme that he constantly repeated. He was, he said, committed to
the principle of consent as was every other party and government with the
one glaring exception of Sinn Fein and the republican movement. On this
basis, he suggested that Unionist fears were misplaced and a political
settlement was not a slippery slope to a united Ireland. The government,
he continued, would not be persuaders for unity. I have no reason to doubt
the personal assurance or integrity of the Prime Minister, but I have every
reason to question that what he claims can necessarily be the outcome of
policies which he endorsed in opposition and has adopted in government.

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He would not be the first Prime Minister to espouse a policy or Northern Ireland that was not, at the time, comprehensively understood nor its consequences fully appreciated and which, with the passage of time, that Prime Minister came to regret.

Let me deal first with the principle of consent and the much vaunted security offered by what is known as the triple lock.

Consent as understood by constitutional nationalism applies only to the transfer of national sovereignty. Pro-union consent is not required for what Albert Reynolds, in a speech at the Mansion House in January 1994, described as the institutions of government. This is a position which Seamus Mallon and others have constantly repeated. They claim that it is for the two sovereign governments alone to determine the nature and extent of the powers of such institutions. Majority consent is deemed quite unnecessary.

What are these institutions of government over which nationalists contend a democratic majority have no control? Such institutions would presumably include the nature and powers of any devolved assembly; the range and powers of any cross border bodies and the remit and control over everything to be enjoyed by any overarching inter-governmental conference.

While any change in the nominal constitutional position of Northern Ireland as a region of the United Kingdom would require consent, no such consent would be required for institutions directed towards an ongoing

devaluation of the actual British citizenship of the people of Northern Ireland. The institutions of government over which the majority would have limited or no control would be directed towards creating a factual and economic unification which would, in time, render the giving of any consent to the transfer of national sovereignty absolutely worthless. At every level, social, economic, cultural and educational, there would be a positive and dynamic drive to render Irish unity a reality to which formal acknowledgement in the course of time by the transfer of national sovereignty would be the only outcome. The process would be one leading from consultation through harmonisation to effective executive action.

Sir David Goodall, the former Deputy Under Secretary of State, and Colleague of Sir Robert Armstrong in the period when the Anglo-Irish Agreement was being constructed, let the cat out of the bag in a letter to "THE TIMES" of Monday 2 June 1997. I quote:-

"The vision of Ireland offered in the Downing Street Declaration and the Joint Framework Document - both of which New Labour has endorsed - is not political unification but a unified civic and economic space on the island of Ireland within which existing constitutional and political loyalties would be protected" (i.e. Northern Ireland would remain within the UK), "Parity of Esteem" for both communities would be entrenched, a variety of Ireland-wide institutions would be established and practical co-operation between the two parts of Ireland

would gather momentum to a point at which national divisions and questions of sovereignty would begin to lose relevance”.

The difference between political unification and unified civic and economic space on the island of Ireland for which Sir David contends, is not easily understood by the politically sophisticated, let alone the mass of pro-Union people. In real terms, can anyone in their right mind believe that Sinn Fein/IRA would even consider, let alone endorse, any basis for a cessation of violence that did not contain the promise, nay, even the guarantee of Irish unity. Only the time factor would be negotiable.

Let me spell out the realities with brutal clarity. In March 1993, Gerry Adams described the conditions under which he would ask the IRA to end its campaign. (Interview with Mark Brennoch, *IRISH TIMES*, 26 March 1993).

“When the British Government says, yes, we are going to do away with Partition, then that does away with the reason for armed struggle.”

He added:-

“How long it takes, what stages it takes is, I think, a matter for finding consensus and agreement.”

The secret talks with Sir Patrick Mayhew's officials throughout the remainder of 1993 ended in the Downing Street Declaration of 16 December 1993 - a document which Mr. Blair tells us he endorses. What did that Declaration amount to. It was the British Government's veiled response to Adams' question. It said, in terms, we the British are ready to

go at once and, for our part, end Partition, but we must first sedate the pro-Union people.

If you declare a cease fire, it will enable us, the British Government, to mount a concerted propaganda campaign vigorously marketing the peace dividend in terms of economic, material and social gain. It will perhaps obtain at least Unionist acquiescence to a package that will give Irish nationalist unity within an acceptable time scale. The methodology to obtain political unity in Ireland was to be similar too that designed for obtaining political unity in Europe. A factual unity brought about by the process of economic functionalism would ultimately bring about political unity as a matter of course. The Framework Documents were to contain the ingredients of that package. The cease fire ended because the Declaration was insufficiently explicit as an end of partition, because the British Government was unwilling to be persuaders rather than facilitators and because it had failed to erect talks within a time table that would have enabled the IRA to both maintain its level of active service units and retain its weaponry. Weapons it would require for a fresh campaign if Britain did not deliver the Unionists.

Now, in terms of a political settlement, the Prime Minister tells us he is fully committed to the approach set out in the Downing Street declaration and that he believes the Joint Framework sets out a reasonable basis for future negotiation. He desires new institutions which fairly represent the interests and aspirations of both communities but nothing is offered to suggest alternatives to the existing and failed Peace Process.

It is a process which has failed because it attempted to do two quite separate and distinct things, both of which were mutually exclusive. First, it attempts to offer Sinn Fein/IRA in particular, and pan nationalism in general, terms for the ending of a violent conflict between armed terrorism and the British state and, at the same time, to lay a basis for a negotiated political settlement among the democratic parties. Fulfilment, however, of the terms required by Sinn Fein/IRA to provide a cease fire could never possibly form the basis for any political agreement that could prove acceptable to the pro-Union parties whose agreement is necessary if any stable settlement is to be achieved.

The whole process of appeasing Sinn Fein/IRA has both sanitised and elevated them to a new media status. Their increasing respectability and the promise they offer of early Irish unity is siphoning off the greener edges of the SDLP support. It is evident that Sinn Fein's refusal either to abandon or condemn violence caused them to suffer no electoral harm. At least, one of the loyalist fringe parties that has become a mirror image of Sinn Fein across the political divide has turned its attention, according to its spokesmen, to an electoral assault upon the Ulster Unionist Party. Under a similar banner of pseudo-social concern was the same implicit threat of intimidation ~~that~~ supporters declare their intention to claim the vote of the working class estates. Democracy cannot co-exist with violent terrorism directed to political ends for democracy will be either subsumed by such violence after having first been corrupted and such corruption is what is presently occurring.

Let me deal with the so-called triple lock. A lock, I fear, that is totally inadequate to prevent the theft of the pro-Union people's British citizenship.

First, any agreement which can emerge from the present Talks must necessarily be within the parameters of both the Downing Street Declaration and the Framework Document. Some minor face saving tinkering may be permitted to the Unionists but every leader of every strand of Irish nationalism has made it clear that they will not countenance the British Government resiling from the principles contained in those documents. If, therefore, a body of Unionist opinion representing a majority of those within the Talks can be either cajoled or pressurised into agreement the whole weight of both the governments coupled with that of the Great, the Good and the Greedy, plus Irish America, will be thrown into action to have such agreement endorsed in any referendum. The power of governments to ensure the ultimate triumph of the despot in persuading the slaves to declare themselves to be free should not be underestimated.

Parliamentary approval as any sort of lock is a macabre joke. There will be the most perfunctory discussion before consent is overwhelmingly given to the fulfilment of a by-partisan policy objective.

Mr. Chairman, perhaps of more immediate concern was the Prime Minister's decision to allow his officials to meet Sinn Fein provided, as he put it, events on the ground here and elsewhere did not make such meetings impossible. These meetings were said to be explanatory, not for

negotiating the terms of a cease fire. Such a defensive statement was perhaps an acknowledgement as to the probable light in which such meetings might be viewed - a view rendered understandable by the fact that John Bruton and Dick Spring have stated repeatedly that Sinn Fein know exactly what they must do to be allowed to get into the Talks. Indeed, this was a sentiment which Dick Spring again declared with some force in last Tuesday's meeting at Castle Buildings.

There have now been two such meetings with a third said to be in the offing. How these meetings can presently be allowed to occur with events like the bomb in Poleglass and the raking of the New Barnsley police station with gun fire requires explanation as to what sort of event on the ground could conceivably prevent their occurrence. The government should be aware that alleged undisclosed or *de facto* cease fires between outrages will not suffice.

It is widely rumoured that next Tuesday at the Talks some initiative will be tabled by both governments on the decommissioning issue. My Party, the Democratic Unionist Party and the Ulster Unionist Party have all submitted their proposals on this issue. These proposals are in broad agreement on five central terms.

- [1] The cease fire must be complete in its nature, permanent in its duration and universal in its application.
- [2] Such a verbal declaration must be accompanied by a practical demonstration of good faith by the handing over of a substantial tranche of weapons and bomb making material.

- [3] Negotiations cannot proceed on the basis of an exchange of weapons in return for political concessions sometimes described as confidence building measures.
- [4] Sinn Fein, for themselves and the IRA, must agree to abide by the outcome of any settlement reached in accordance with agreed procedures.
- [5] Sinn Fein, for themselves and the IRA, must sign up for the six Mitchell principles.

It is, of course, vital to the maintenance of any degree of confidence between the government and the pro-Union community that any understanding or arrangement arrived at between the British Government and Sinn Fein in the course of their meetings must be placed forthwith in the public domain of the Castle Building Talks.

Mr. Chairman, I believe there is an increase in consensus of opinion that the Talks as presently formulated on the basis of an unequivocal restoration of failed and tactical IRA cease fire leading to Sinn Fein's inclusion cannot succeed. The time has surely come when no further progress within this format enjoys any possibility of success. It is a formula which has allowed the politics of terror to prosper at the expense of democratic consensus. It is a format which, in its application, has set two communities at each other's throats and engendered bitterness between them at a level hitherto unexperienced.

The time has surely come, Mr. Chairman, for a fundamental reassessment of where exactly this alleged Peace Process is taking the entire community.

Prior to its commencement, the people of Northern Ireland were divided between, on the one hand, a relatively small group of terrorists of all kinds coupled with a modest number of political associates. On the other side, there was the overwhelming number of decent people from the entire community who, although they may have had differing political views and aspirations were all wedded to the principles of democracy. As a result of this alleged Peace Process we now have two communities in open confrontation and bitter disagreement on an increasingly widespread scale. What is now needed is a fresh and a new beginning which takes account of the realities based upon the negotiations of those dedicated solely to democratic procedures and which attempts to heal the wounds of this community from the bottom up.

May I close with this analogy. It has become surgical practice gained sadly from the experience of Northern Ireland's divisions that deep wounds from high velocity bullets are best kept open so that they can be healed from the bottom up to the surface. Attempts at external closure merely have the effect of trapping infection, causing wounds to fester and ultimately ending in the death of the patient.