An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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14 April 1995

Quentin Thomas
Northern Ireland Office
Whiehall
London

A Chara,

Thank you for your letter of 13 April.

We are disappointed that your letter fails to deal with the need for your government to recognise the rights of Sinn Fein voters. It is obvious that the British government's refusal to deal with Sinn Fein at a political level must end. I am concerned that in the various drafts sent by you to us and including your last letter that you are not prepared to deal with this fundamental issue with a view to its resolution. You consistently discriminate against the Sinn Fein electorate.

It is important that all sections of the electorate are accorded equality of treatment and that the validity of all electoral mandates is accepted and acted upon.

We are concerned therefore at the comments of Patrick Mayhew in Paris, on 11 April, where he said clearly that even if we move into these meetings with government ministers that discrimination against Sinn Fein and our electorate will continue through the exclusion of our party from inclusive political dialogue. This was re-inforced by the announcement that discussions with the other electorally mandated parties on the framework document is about to commence and that Sinn Fein will be excluded from these discussions: that your government is attempting to force a two track approach to talks, with Sinn Fein in a second track, at a different level and pace from the other parties.

We cannot accept that the views of the Sinn Fein electorate will thus be excluded from the dialogue and negotiations which will shape the future of Ireland and the Irish people.

We are not prepared to allow our electorate to be treated as second class citizens or to be equated with the representatives of loyalist paramilitaries who have no electoral mandate. The position is quite clear. There must be an end to political discrimination. All electorally mandated political parties must be accorded equality of treatment.

Sinn Fein and our voters must now be accorded equality of treatment. Your government should meet with us on the same basis that you are proposing to meet the other

democratically mandated political parties. In this context we look forward to the rationalisation of contact between our party and the British government in consequence of the ending of the ban on ministerial contact with Sinn Fein.

We have already made clear that we will discuss, in a serious and constructive manner, any issue you wish to raise, including the decommissioning of arms along with all other relevant issues. We shall approach this and all issues on the basis of our mandate and analysis, with a view to seeking the resolution of this and all relevant issues.

It is important that Sinn Fein is able to raise the issues arising from the need for demilitarisation. We understand that your side is ready to discuss, in a serious and constructive manner, these issues in line with our shared commitment to discuss matters of importance to either side.

It is accepted that the most urgent and important issue facing us all is to remove the causes of conflict, overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted; to achieve a lasting peace through a negotiated settlement. Considerable progress has been made so far. This progress must be consolidated. Everyone concerned to achieve a lasting peace must apply themselves to this task, which can only be accomplished by dialogue; through inclusive discussions and negotiations involving all parties with an electoral mandate.

I am sure that on this basis, and our shared commitment to discuss all relevant issues in a serious, constructive, detailed and substantive manner that we can now arrange an early meeting with ministers.

Is mise

Siobhán O'Hanlon

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