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cc: AMBASSADOR, WASHINGTON
DATE: 2 NOVEMBER, 1995

RE: DAVID TRIMBLE, NEW YORK, 2 NOVEMBER, 1995

David Trimble was guest speaker today at a lunch organised by the National Committee on American Foreign Policy, held at the New York headquarters of Mutual of America.

In his presentation, Trimble described his meetings with leaders in Ireland North and South, in London and in Washington as a natural progression, culminating in his meeting yesterday with President Clinton. He said that the President had emphasised his support for the principle of consent and the necessity of decommissioning. Trimble cited a number of polls which indicated that only 14-20% of the people of Northern Ireland favoured union with the South and went on to quote Fr. Denis Faul to the effect that "time was running out for old-style nationalism".

On decommissioning, Trimble quoted from memory from Para 10 of the Downing Street Declaration, specifically on the need for a democratic mandate, the need to demonstrate a permanent end to violence and to establish a commitment to exclusively peaceful means and that dialogue would then ensue "in due course". Trimble also quoted the Tanaiste from speeches on 15 September '93 and 15 June '94 regarding handing over of arms. Trimble went on to refer to Washington 1,2, and 3 and said that what was referred to was a process not a symbolic act. In order for politicians to proceed in good faith, there was a need for a credible process to begin, to signal that the war is over. Quoting Danny Morrisson's phrase about the armalite and the ballot

box, Trimble said it was time to throw away the armalite.

Trimble's further gloss on the subject was that President Clinton had said in May that decommissioning was the next step and he said that the twin-track approach had been devised to deal with this. However, he said, this approach ran aground in September following a meeting in Belfast between Sinn Fein and two Irish civil servants, as a result of which the Irish Government withdrew from a planned summit with P.M. Major and stalemate had since prevailed. Trimble said that efforts were still going on but that he did not think the twin-track approach could be resuscitated. He had received a fax from London yesterday which indicated little change. In this regard, Trimble said that the real question is "will there be any actual decommissioning?" And, given the circumstance, it will now be very obvious "which side blinks".

Against that background, Trimble saw the need for some alternative approach viz. his Assembly proposal. It was good that matters should proceed slowly, he said, but not grind to a halt, that a complete impasse would be unhealthy. Elections would therefore be a good thing, would give a democratic mandate to the paramilitary parties and a mandate to Sinn Fein founded on a platform of peace, democracy and policies for the future.

Trimble emphasised that the Convention or Assembly would be solely for debate and not negotiations. It would take evidence from both sides, from all elected parties, including on such issues as possible future cross-border cooperation. If the pace is forced, however, Trimble predicted that the DUP won't agree to join in - and perhaps not the UUP either (and here he quoted the Tanaiste as having said to him at their recent meeting, "Your presence and contribution is indispensable).

Trimble welcomed the prospect of President Clinton's visit to Northern Ireland as opening up business and investment opportunities and predicted it would portray Belfast and the North generally as very nice and very safe.

In his introduction of Trimble, George Schwab, NCAFP President, had focused more on Jim Molyneux than on Trimble, saying that Molyneux had related well to Bill Flynn and had emphasised that reconciliation was occurring and growing in Northern Ireland. (In a Freudian slip which provoked hearty laughter, Schwab

described Trimble as leader of the largest Unionist army in Northern Ireland.) Schwab also emphasised that, for a number of strategic reasons (NATO etc.) NCAFP took the view that events in Northern Ireland were vital to U.S. foreign policy and security interests. In his opening remarks, Bill Flynn added that it was a right and a duty for the United States to support a peaceful solution based on the Downing Street Declaration and the Joint Framework Document. There had been "little or no progress", however, said Flynn and decommissioning was being made a precondition rather than one of 4 or 5 areas to be considered in the actual talks. Rhetorically, Flynn wondered had they misunderstood, what had they misunderstood, had they been conned?

Q & A

After Trimble's remarks, Schwab opened the Q & A by asserting that there was no explicit reference to decommissioning in Para. 10 of the Downing Street Declaration. To applause, he said that it seemed very strange to him to introduce a condition which did not exist and to make it into a precondition, whether to derail or postpone the next step in the peace process. Trimble strongly rejected this, saying that Washington 3 simply made explicit what was already implicit in the Downing Street Declaration. The next questioner said that Sinn Fin had at the time sought clarification of the DSD and that decommissioning was not mentioned then. Trimble suggested that Sinn Fein must not have raised the question. On the protection of minority rights in Northern Ireland, Trimble said that in Britain and other European countries there was access to the supra-national European Court of Human Rights - which was not the case in America!

Raising the temperature somewhat further, Jerome Wilson (a cousin of the late Senator Gordon Wilson) asked what on earth Trimble was afraid of, given the acceptance of the principle of consent by the two Governments. Trimble responded that as an Ulster Scot he was British and did not wish to join with a secessionist state set up to be Gaelic and Catholic. The socially and culturally more liberal ethos in Northern Ireland could not be accommodated in such a mono-cultural state, said Trimble. (In a personal intervention, Angela Phelan queried generally the benefit of emotive or offensive language and pointed to the advantages evident since the ceasefire e.g. N.I. tourism up 58%).

In response to other questions, Trimble stated his view that CSCE and Council of Europe principles should be applied in Northern Ireland and he argued the merits of

the Fair Employment Act against the MacBride Principles.

Comment

In the course of the reception preceding the luncheon, I spoke with Trimble, Ken Maginnis, Jeffrey Donaldson and Anne Smith, expressing a welcome and a positive overall attitude.

Although somewhat tense and stiff throughout the proceedings Trimble spoke with considerable confidence and a fluency from some notes jotted down before his presentation. The group of about 100, a similar cross-section to that which gathered in the same forum last month to hear Gerry Adams, gave him a courteous if subdued hearing -although there were a few groans at his lurid depiction of the Republic as a mono-cultural, Gaelic, Catholic, secessionist state. (When he returned to the table, I mildly said to him that I had not wished to intervene but that his description of the Republic seemed somewhat unfair.)

Afterwards one person referred to Trimble's statement that time was running out for old-style nationalism and wondered whether Trimble could see that the same was true of old-style unionism. Overall, however, Trimble's visit was welcomed as an inherently positive development which demonstrated that he could expect to receive a fair hearing here and a reasoned response.