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SECRET and DRAFT

Meeting with Sinn Féin
on Friday, 24 May 1996

The Government side were represented by Sec. Teahon, Sec. Dalton, S/Sec. O hUiginn and the undersigned. The Sinn Féin delegation comprised Martin McGuinness, Aidan McAteer, Rita O'Hare and Dawn Foyle.

The following does not purport to be a fully comprehensive verbatim account.

1. The meeting opened with exchanges on the 20 July 1994 document. **Teahon** said that no Government decision was taken on it at the time; the Taoiseach was assured by his predecessor that the ceasefire was not secured on foot of any deal; the Tánaiste had been completely unaware of any such document; and consequently there could not have been any Government agreement on it. However, this does not mean that agreement between the Government and Sinn Féin could not now be reached. **McGuinness** responded that, at the time, Sinn Féin was given the 'very clear impression' that the document in question had been cleared by the previous Government. **Dalton** suggested that it is best to leave that document behind now behind now and move onto a position that can be agreed by both sides. **McGuinness** concurred by saying that 'there is nothing to be gained from going back into history'. Both sides should 'move on'.
2. The discussion then switched to Wednesday's Intergovernmental Conference meeting. **O hUiginn** described the meeting as 'fairly difficult'. Work remains to be done on where precisely the British Government want the negotiations to go. Some key detail on the process is still vague. For the success of the negotiations, the Government believe that reaching a number of 'common positions' with the British Government is important. Elections to lead to all-party talks on 10 June; the talks to deal with the Mitchell report and of course the other substantive issues; decommissioning to be addressed 'upfront' in the talks while not blocking or stalling them; and therefore decommissioning would need to be addressed at the beginning. The Government are continuing their efforts with the British to work out a practical scenario for dealing with full ambit of considerations involved. While there was lots of discussion at Wednesday's meeting on how decommissioning should be handled, no clear scenario has yet been agreed.
3. **O hUiginn** continued that the British like ourselves envisage the Mitchell Report being addressed in the opening Plenary session but the Irish Government side want an 'exit strategy', the practical implementation of

which requires discretionary powers being vested in the Chair. While the British Government are effectively asking Senator Mitchell to become involved, it is 'worrying that they do not seem eager to give him the required elasticity of discretion'. In summary, British Government intentions are not very clear at present; we have tried to bring home to them the necessity of thinking through the different angles; we have the sense of them having thought through the opening position but not the logical follow-on scenario. We therefore cannot say at present that a clear scenario for the conduct of negotiations exists. The Government will of course be working hard on this and hopefully next Tuesday's meeting will result in progress. The British Government are under a lot of pressure now and are very worried about Trimble's position. They are concerned to ensure that nothing done before the elections should reduce Trimble's room for manoeuvre in them. It therefore seems that any movement on the part of the British Government will take place after the elections though that should not be interpreted as there being 'perfect comfort after 30 May'.

4. **O hUiginn** added that the Government line being imparted to the US Administration at present is that the two Governments must hold to our joint commitments but any pressure from that quarter will have to wait at least until two days after the elections. In saying all this however, it should be noted that despite what Mayhew said after Wednesday's meeting, the Irish Government *are* 'taking leave of our own preference on the decommissioning issue by pursuing what we believe to be deliverable'. **Dalton** elaborated by saying that the British Government want, at the beginning of negotiations, agreement in principle that there will be some decommissioning in the course of the all-party talks. The Irish Government are saying: "that amounts to a new precondition". We are not going to pursue that course of action. We will not be demanding some decommissioning. Mitchell set down the rules and therefore he should be the arbiter. **Teahon** added: 'We are authorised to tell you that the Government will not accept that precondition to the 10 June talks'.
5. **McGuinness** in response queried if the Government have a view on 'whether the British Government and Unionist position on decommissioning is a joint enterprise'. **Teahon** replied that Major's *Irish Times* set in motion a series of effects which had nothing to do with the Unionists per se. The debate on the article centred totally on the words written about decommissioning which sent out vibes that the British Government were getting away from actual decommissioning during the talks. As a consequence, Major 'got a lot a flak from Cranbourne et al that this was not

acceptable'. The Irish Government's position is that we want Sinn Féin at the talks, you know the ceasefire requirement, but 'we do not accept as a requirement upfront agreement to decommissioning during the talks'. The key consideration in all this is whether the British Government position on decommissioning is rigidly fixed or else moveable after 30 May.

6. **O hUiginn** said that the decommissioning issue is in large part 'too complicated for mainstream Tory culture'. At the Tory Party Conference after the IRA ceasefire was declared, the ceasefire was barely mentioned and seemingly, a significant proportion of delegates only wanted to hear that the IRA had been crushed. The decommissioning issue could be 'a bridge or holding operation between Major's understanding of the Northern Ireland issue and the Cranbournes of his party who do not understand'. Major is 'in a corner on everything' and there could well be a general election in Britain late this summer or in the autumn. **O hUiginn** continued: 'What the British Prime Minister cannot and will not do is allow the decommissioning issue to be ruled out completely'. The Government are hoping that Mitchell will be allowed to get the all-party talks off the ground and that Major will buy into the idea of him being 'the arbiter in the process'. The stakes are more or less in that area - get the negotiations launched; ensure 'as fair a wind as possible' for all positions; and if the negotiations properly 'lift off', then the decommissioning may be addressed in a more realistic perspective. If not, then recriminations will ensue.

7. **Dalton** said that on the less positive side, the British Government 'are not yet ready to stop trying for one more move on the decommissioning issue'. On the more positive side however, the Irish Government 'will not move to a position where a new precondition is created'. **Teahon** added that if the issue is not resolved by or on Tuesday next, then the Taoiseach will likely be in contact with the British Prime Minister and the Government side are presently in contact with the US Administration on progress. In response to a question from McGuinness, **O hUiginn** said that a clearer picture will emerge after the elections on the extent to which the British Government position is determined by concern for Trimble in the elections and to what extent their position is more substantive. **Teahon** emphasised the point by saying that the Taoiseach's position is clear - 'there must be no further precondition'. **McGuinness** responded that he is 'very pleased with the position of the Tánaiste and now the Taoiseach on decommissioning'. **O hUiginn** added that the Government 'are on strong ground with the US vis-à-vis the British Government and any new precondition'.

8. **McGuinness** asked about British Government thinking on Senator Mitchell as Chair of the negotiations. **O hUiginn** referred to Michael Ancram's recent US visit where he was proposing that Mitchell would chair the Plenary session and perhaps decommissioning but Strand Two as well would be too much. Mitchell himself however will want the status to do the full job. The Irish Government's position is that Senator Mitchell should chair 'the whole lot' but assisted perhaps by two Deputy Chairs. The British Government however 'are not yet at that point'. The test in all this is 'if Mitchell is needed in Strand Two, can he come in'? There is a worry that if Mitchell was restricted to the Plenary Sessions, he would have to wait for the next Plenary meeting to come about before he could get involved again. **Dalton** added that Mitchell will not want a subsidiary role. **McGuinness** again reverted back to an earlier question regarding the focus on decommissioning after the elections. **O hUiginn** set his response in the context of the Chairmanship issue: 'If the British Government want Mitchell, he must be given a clear position. We hope that the US will push for that'.
9. **Teahon** asked for an account of Sinn Féin's position in broad terms on talks package now emerging. **McGuinness** responded that many of their supporters feel that matters are in a sort of a limbo and they want 'a more focused situation'. Sinn Féin do not expect British Government movement on the decommissioning issue until the elections are over. Moloney's article in the *Sunday Tribune* had caused difficulty for them. They had wanted to delay Adams' statement on the Mitchell Principles until 23 or 24 May. At the same time, however, 'a decisive decision was taken and our position is now clear'. Sinn Féin 'have now shown our intent on the Principles but at a cost to us'. **McGuinness** added: 'It has caused great difficulty for Sinn Féin. There is fairly serious discontent. I don't know how it is going to pan out. We want real and meaningful negotiations. This has been a very difficult week for us. We are fighting to contain the situation'. **McAteer**, picking up on these points, said: 'On the Mitchell Principles development, we were unable to give you prior notice of it. That statement was a very significant move on our part. It is a broad nod towards the Tánaiste's Strand Four suggestion. We deliberately held back from any comment on what came out of the IGC negotiations. We are trying to let the process develop and see how the situation can be moved on'. **McGuinness** interjected that Sinn Féin are 'continually assessing developments' but are 'hoping for more focus in the process'. **McAteer** repeated that 'we are trying hard not to exacerbate the situation and the difficulties presently being encountered'.
(Comment: I interpreted this to mean the difficulties being encountered by

the Tánaiste in his discussions with Mayhew). **Dalton** questioned further about reaction within Republican circles to Adams' statement on the Mitchell Principles. **McGuinness** responded that 'the Ard Comhairle meeting on Saturday in Dublin was very, very difficult'. The discontent expressed at the meeting 'spread outside'. The manner of Adams' deliverance of his statement was probably a factor but, because of the *Sunday Tribune* article, he simply 'could not have given a holding position'.

- 10 **Dalton** then asked if Adams' statement on the Mitchell Principles has made it any easier for Sinn Féin to go to the IRA seeking a reinstatement of the ceasefire. **McGuinness** said that the surrounding controversy is 'a Sinn Féin problem - not an IRA one'. He personally had canvassed in recent days in the SDLP strong areas of Derry. The response is 'very different now' to that in previous elections. There is 'a very clear understanding by Nationalists [SDLP supporters] that Sinn Féin have taken risks'. Some SDLP supporters, who have never voted for Sinn Féin, have said that they will switch because 'Sinn Féin have got a raw deal'. If that translates on 30 May, then the prospects are looking good. Overall, 'the reaction to Sinn Féin on the doorsteps has been excellent throughout the six counties'. Asked by **O hUiginn** if the absence of an IRA ceasefire has been mentioned much during the canvas, **McGuinness** answered that it was raised on only two occasions with him. The SDLP in Derry must be getting a bit nervous about Sinn Féin taking votes from them if Mark Durkan's article in the *Derry Journal* is an appropriate barometer to go by. **McGuinness** continued: 'Nationalists are watching the Intergovernmental Conference meetings very closely. At present, they see little sign of movement before the elections.' Almost as an aside, he added that 'we're very surprised that McCartney has taken Cedric Wilson on board'.
- 11 Turning to the 10 June talks, **McGuinness** said that 'we must proceed with a package as a matter of urgency' and then asked if the Government delegation had a Paper for presentation to them. **Teahon** replied that the Taoiseach will not do anything other than by the book. He has the approval of the Government to read out a pre-prepared text. It is very important to the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste that a presentation of the kind about to be made would have the Government's approval. It has that approval and is based on previously known Government positions but includes as well some points made by Sinn Féin. The Government have no problem if Sinn Féin say that what he is about to read is useful for going to the IRA in the context of reinstatement of its ceasefire. **Dalton** emphasised that Teahon's presentation is 'the spoken word'.

12 **Teahon** then read the following at a slow yet methodical and emphatic pace including paragraph numbers. **Dawn Foyle** transcribed for Sinn Féin.

As we are now moving towards the opening date for all-party negotiations, we thought it would be helpful to sketch an outline of the Government's negotiating position on some of the points of interest to you. The references which follow concerning Sinn Fein are of course contingent upon an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire of August 1994.

1. *Both Governments acknowledged in the Joint Declaration of 15 December 1993*

"that the most urgent and important issue facing the people of Ireland, North and South, and the British and Irish Government together, is to remove the causes of the conflict, to overcome the legacy of history and to heal the divisions which have resulted".

That remains the fundamental objective of the Irish Government's Anglo-Irish policy.

2. *To achieve this objective, the Irish Government seeks to build a dynamic of trust through an intensive process of political dialogue and engagement, both among the parties who share in, or derive from, the nationalist tradition in Ireland, and, secondly, between that tradition as a whole and the unionist tradition as a whole. They will seek to do so in co-operation with the British Government, on the basis of their common public commitment to work together to achieve agreement which establishes peace, stability and reconciliation among all the people who inhabit the island and which embraces the totality of relationships.*

3. *The means to such agreement is a process of negotiations which must be*

- peaceful, based on exclusively democratic and political means, without recourse to the threat or use of violence or coercion;*
- inclusive, involving both Governments and all the relevant political parties with the necessary democratic mandate and commitment;*
- comprehensive, with all issues on the table and an agenda ensuring a fair hearing for the significant concerns of all the participants;*

- open, with no outcome either predetermined or excluded in advance
 - in good faith, with all parties seriously addressing all aspects of the agreed agenda, and making every effort to reach agreement, and the Governments, for their part, committed to doing so with a view to overcoming any obstacles which may arise.
4. *The Irish Government will engage in the negotiating process now fixed for June 10th, on the basis of these criteria. It will seek to win the co-operation and support of the SDLP and Sinn Féin and of other parties, if possible, for a common democratically-based approach, aimed at a new political settlement based on consent, which will respect, and therefore must accommodate, the democratic rights, the identities and allegiances of the people of both the unionist and nationalist traditions.*
 5. *The Irish Government wishes Sinn Fein to join fully in this task, and make its own distinctive contribution to a democratic resolution of the conflict. Only a sustained and durable climate of peace can create the necessary healing environment where inherited fears and animosities can be overcome, and a positive political dynamic can prevail.*
 6. *An approach along the lines envisaged in paragraph 4 above would make it possible to reach out in a new way, and to offer a convincing and authoritative accommodation, based on equality and mutual respect, to the unionist tradition in the negotiating process.*
 7. *The details of the arrangements to reflect such a new relationship would be a matter for negotiation and agreement between all those at the negotiating table. The position of the Irish Government in this respect will be governed by the commitments it has made and the principles it has subscribed to publicly, in particular in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Joint Declaration, and in the New Framework for Agreement and in the various speeches and statements made by the Taoiseach and the Tánaiste, especially the Taoiseach's speech in Finglas on 30 April.*
 8. *There is discernible common ground between the positions set out in these documents and statements, and the public positions on record on behalf of the SDLP and Sinn Fein, (as well of course as well-documented differences). There would be broad agreement*

that a just and lasting settlement is required to underpin and sustain peace.

that the experience of Northern Ireland to date shows that stability and well-being will not be found under any political system which is refused allegiance or rejected on grounds of identity or discrimination by a significant minority of those governed by it.

that since present structures have proved inadequate by this test new agreed structures are required across all the relationships.

and that an internal settlement is not a solution, since such an approach fails to deal adequately with all the key relationships.

9. *Notwithstanding well documented differences of opinion within the nationalist tradition on how the principle of self-determination for the people of Ireland should be defined and interpreted, it is accepted*

- *that its exercise should be a matter for agreement between the people of Ireland, free from violence and coercion or external impediment.*
- *and that a new agreement is only achievable and viable if it can earn and enjoy the allegiance of the different traditions on the island by accommodating diversity and providing for reconciliation between all the people of Ireland.*

10. *While no group or organisation has a veto over the policy of a democratically elected Government, the purpose of negotiations is to seek agreement which can command the consent and allegiance of all. This, and the stated goal of a new beginning in all the relationships will require significant change along lines described in the "Framework Documents".*

11. *In the preamble to the Anglo-Irish Agreement 1985, the Irish Government and the British Government recognise the need for continuing efforts to reconcile and to acknowledge the rights of the two major traditions that exist in Ireland, represented on the one hand by those who wish for no change in the present status of Northern Ireland and on the other hand by those who aspire to a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means and through agreement. The relationships between the people of Ireland must be addressed and ultimately agreed by the people of Ireland themselves.*

Both Governments are committed in the Downing Street Declaration to work together to achieve such an agreement which they recognise may, as of right, take the form of agreed structures for the island as a whole, including a united Ireland achieved by peaceful means. The Irish Government believes that this goal can only be achieved by those who favour this outcome persuading those who do not, peacefully and without coercion or violence.

- 12. The Irish Government will work for an ever closer coming together of all the people, and of the two traditions in Ireland, on the basis of consent and by agreement. Their co-operation with the SDLP, Sinn Féin and others in this respect, in the negotiations and more generally, will at all times reflect the principle that the pursuit of nationalist goals and aspirations must be based exclusively on peaceful methods, democratic persuasion and freely-given consent.*
- 13. The Irish Government will also seek to ensure that new arrangements enshrine equality of democratic opportunity for the pursuit and realisation of the wider political aspirations of both communities in Northern Ireland (on the lines set out in paragraphs 19 and 20 of New Framework for Agreement).*
- 14. In the vital area of how human rights might best be protected and promoted in circumstances of peace and political stability, the Irish Government will seek to ensure that the comprehensive, systematic, effective and entrenched protection of human rights - civil, political, economic and social - will underpin the establishment and operation of agreed institutions and structures. The Government will, in this context, pursue the implementation of the measures envisaged by the Irish and British Governments in paragraphs 50-53 of the Joint Framework Document.*
- 15. The Irish Government recognise that in building trust and reconciliation*
 - appropriate action on the various issues relating to those who have been imprisoned in the context of the conflict will be important; and*
 - all concerned must take particular account of and be sensitive to, the position of those who have suffered directly from violence and injustice from whatever source.*

The Taoiseach has indicated the Government's readiness, in the context of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire of August, 1994, in regard to

IRA prisoners held in the State, to resume policies being operated while the August, 1994 ceasefire held. The Government are prepared to develop these, as appropriate, in the light of the growth of confidence following a restored ceasefire. They will continue to pursue vigorously the transfer of prisoners held in Britain to the North or South, as appropriate, and other issues regarding prisoners held in the North or in Britain.

- 16. The Irish Government recall the reaffirmation by it and by the British Government, in the Joint Communiqué of 28 November, 1995, at a time when ceasefires held, that in establishing the International Body on Decommissioning, the two Governments were willing to continue to take responsive measures, advised by their respective security authorities, as the threat reduces. Following the meeting of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Conference on 22 May, 1996 the Irish and British Governments explicitly reiterated this willingness in the context of an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire.*
- 17. Subject to the unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, and consistent with their responsibilities as a sovereign Government mandated by the electorate to deal with the British Government and to reach out in a spirit of reconciliation to the unionist tradition, the Irish Government is prepared to engage in a close process of information and political consultations with parties democratically representing the nationalist community in Northern Ireland on the development of the peace process and the conduct of negotiations. This would involve meetings with representatives of these parties either individually or collectively, as far as practicable on request by either side. There will also be an information and consultation process with other Northern parties, on a basis to be worked out with them.*
- 18. More structured liaison arrangements for the negotiating process could be established by agreement. These could involve a process of information and consultation on any significant developments affecting the proposed approach and the equality agenda outlined above, and set out at length in the various documents to which the Irish Government have given their formal and public commitment.*
- 19. Such liaison arrangements with the Irish Government might also seek to develop and win support for a balanced programme of confidence building measures, aimed at both nationalist and unionist concerns, and which would be implemented either in the course of the negotiations, or as part of their outcome.*

20. *An approach along the lines set out above, based resolutely on values of peaceful dialogue, equality and democratic dignity, would significantly enhance the prospects for successful negotiations. It cannot be put in place except on the basis of an unequivocal and definitive commitment to a democratic and peaceful strategy by all those involved in it.*
21. *An unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, the maintenance of the Loyalist ceasefire, and a total and absolute commitment to the principles of democracy and non-violence set out in the report of the International Body by all concerned would ensure that most constructive possible engagement of the nationalist and the unionist traditions in a process of negotiations which, however difficult, would in those circumstances be inclusive as no other negotiations before this,*
22. *It would also offer the optimum basis to recruit and retain the support of Irish communities from both traditions overseas, of the US administration and of other friendly Governments, who are anxious to support progress and agreement, provided it is on a basis that is peaceful and democratic, and honourable and fair to all. The effectiveness of the Irish Government in seeking such support will be directly proportional to the degree we can show that any shared approach reflects these qualities, and reconciles rather than threatens the basic rights of either side.*
23. *It is intended that there will be an early meeting between the Government and Sinn Féin subsequent to a restoration of the ceasefire.*

13 At the end of Teahon's presentation, **McGuinness** said that Sinn Féin will study closely everything that was said. **O hUiginn** said that there was 'nothing in the presentation that is not solid with the Irish Government in negotiations'. **Teahon** then asked if Sinn Féin intend waiting until the Irish Government had resolved the outstanding issues with British before going to the IRA. **McGuinness** replied: 'The British Government's position is obviously crucial but that will not deter us from proceeding'. Pressed for more detail by Teahon and O hUiginn, **McGuinness** said that Sinn Fein's position is that 'we must pursue the different elements of the package'. He added: 'We will try to get agreement on this [i.e. Teahon's presentation] as quickly as possible'. **O hUiginn** added that the presentation is not a position open to negotiation with Sinn Féin. Rather, it represents 'a definition of where the Government stands'. **McGuinness** then said that there was 'some very good and very helpful stuff' in Teahon's presentation but he regretted the omission of any references to constitutional change or reunification as a

policy goal of the Irish Government. However, they would need time to give it 'much serious consideration...it will be discussed with others'. **O hUiginn** responded that Teahon's presentation comprised the 'best from the Forum'. In it, the Government have gone 'as close as it possibly can to Sinn Féin's position and while unlikely to move beyond that, the delegation could be assured that the position outlined 'would be sustained in all parts by the Government'. **Dalton** urged the delegation 'to do the very best you can with it to secure a restoration of the ceasefire'. **McGuinness** asked if Sinn Féin were being given the option to come back on the presentation when they had studied more closely its contents. An affirmative response was given. When **O hUiginn** said that 'the Irish Government position is now defined to help you and this position is unquestionable', **McGuinness** focused on when the next meeting should take place. It was agreed that both sides would be in touch on this.

14 The discussions then switched again to Tuesday's Intergovernmental Conference meeting. **O hUiginn** said that while the meeting was shaping up to be a difficult one, the Tánaiste would be pushing for the 'utmost clarity' on all aspects of British Government intentions on the process. If the unresolved issues are getting 'too close to the wire', then 'the US may be brought into play'. **Teahon** added that Sinn Féin's inclusion in the all-party negotiations remained conditional on 'an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire'. The Government 'will stick to that position'. **Dalton** said that the Government were equally determined that 'there would be no more preconditions'. **McGuinness** replied that a restoration of the ceasefire for Sinn Féin's participation in the negotiations is a precondition - 'the elections will give Sinn Féin the right to be at the negotiations'. However, 'whatever else we can do , we will do', notwithstanding that the 'role of the British Government and Unionists is very important in all this'. **Teahon** said that the Government have no problem with putting into the public domain - perhaps in Speech form - the presentation he had just made. If that would help the IRA to reinstate its ceasefire, Sinn Féin should let us know.

15 In response to a question on the timeframe for negotiations, **O hUiginn** said that Unionists are fearful of an absolute deadline and that the Government are open to the idea of reports being subject to target dates supplemented by review mechanisms at Summit level perhaps. The focus at present, however, is on issues like the Chairmanship, procedures and so on. **Teahon** added that the first phase of the negotiations would take one week approximately but it would be worrying if it went too much beyond that. The Government are seeking to accord Mitchell sufficient discretion to

determine movement to the next and subsequent phases. In that regard, the review mechanism option in terms of Summit meetings may be very important. **O hUiginn** elaborated by saying that 'Senator Mitchell's presence means that the British Government will take the negotiations seriously because of the US angle'. The British Government never ignore US involvement. He cautioned on the possibility that the all-party talks may be really taking off when the British Government call a General Election - perhaps in the summer or autumn. Sinn Féin and the wider Republican Movement should not interpret such a development as a calculated breach of faith - 'you must hold the ship until the new British Government would be in power'. Sinn Féin must be patient. **Dalton** urged Sinn Féin to build into their considerations on the negotiations factors like the various internal pressures on the present British Government.

- 16 **McGuinness** asked about the role if any envisaged for General de Chastelain. **O hUiginn** said that de Chastelain had proved himself to be very reasonable, thoughtful and honourable in his part as a co-chair of the International Body. There is universal agreement that he 'played a very straight bat'. The British are seeking someone like de Chastelain to chair Strand Two, essentially as an expression of British honour if the Irish favourite, Senator Mitchell, gets the main job. The Irish Government have no problem with Mitchell being assisted in his role by de Chastelain. That is crucially dependent however on the flexibility and authority vested in Mitchell. In that regard, the Irish Government are working hard to 'build in the necessary elasticity for Mitchell to move, on the basis of his own judgement, into any area at any time'.
- 17 **O'Hare** then commented on Teahon's presentation. Sinn Féin want the all-party negotiations to work but the absence of any reference to constitutional change was 'a flaw'. The presentation set out 'no scenario of what the Government are seeking in that area, including Irish unity'. The 'Nationalist vision of hope' on eventual unity is not fundamentally accounted for. **O hUiginn** countered that 'every party will go into the negotiations with the integrity of its own position'. The Irish Government view that Mitchell Principles as essentially 'neutral ground' and its position on Anglo-Irish relations generally reflects the attitudes of the people in this State. What Mr. Teahon had said earlier is 'solid ground' and represents 'the closest the Government can go to what Sinn Féin supporters want'. Situating the whole debate within an Irish unity versus UK union context is 'too stark'. The Government's position is: (1) to 'work for a level playing for both traditions'; and (2) to create 'a stable situation'. In the all-party

negotiations, Sinn Féin should deal in concepts like equality and parity of esteem because 'you will not get a united Ireland out of the talks - you won't get that but you can work for a road to it'. As matters presently stand, the Unionist nightmare is 'the full implementation of the Framework Document'. **McGuinness** said that Sinn Féin's difficulty is that the Irish Government seems to be putting limits on what can be achieved in the negotiations before they even commence - 'eventual unification seems out of the picture for everyone except us; is Sinn Féin the only party left in Ireland seeking unity?; writing unity out of the script is setting a limit on what can be achieved'. **Dalton** said that the all-party talks will be around the Joint Framework Document with the possibility of further unity being left to the longer term. **McGuinness** responded: 'The Joint Framework Document amounts to a British Government admission that partition has failed. In the negotiations, however, people must consider the long-term as well'.

18 **O hUiginn** said that Sinn Féin must know by now that the British Government will not expel the Unionists. In the Joint Framework Document, 'the focus is on practicalities rather than the aspirational dimensions of unity'. In negotiations, the party should focus not on Irish unity but on the creation of a level playing field for the Nationalist position. A focus on unity would trap Sinn Féin in the 'idiom of old Irish politics'. **Teahon** added that Sinn Féin should work towards a common position with the Irish Government, the SDLP and the US Administration. If however the party concentrates on a united Ireland, then it is likely that one or more of the other three loosely called Nationalist parties will find ground to disagree with Sinn Féin's position, thereby splitting Nationalism. **McGuinness** replied: 'You know how pragmatic Sinn Féin are... We have freed ourselves... Yet, we're going to retain the integrity of our position and the Irish Government should not be afraid to pursue unity'.

19 **O hUiginn** asserted that the IRA ceasefire made 'nationalists in Dublin feel nationalist again or at least enabled them not to feel embarrassed about it'. The Republican Movement has two options at its disposal: to opt for exclusively peaceful and democratic means or opt out of that; if the former, 'you stay in', if the latter, 'you stay out'. **McGuinness** responded: 'Nationalists in the north of Ireland will not be downbeaten or systematically treated unjustly again. That is not resolved yet. Northern Ireland nationalists are saying: "the time has come for our day in the sun".... We [i.e. Sinn Féin] are honestly trying to bring about a resolution to the conflict'. At this point, he referred again to the party's statement on the Mitchell Principles. **Teahon** said that it is because the Government are 'so

conscious of the risks Sinn Féin have taken that the exclusively peaceful approach is being pressed on them'. This is augmented by a judgement on 'a splinter in thinking on unity in the South'. **McGuinness** argued that Sinn Féin have taken on board all that. In Northern Ireland, there is a constituency of people who, without any external support, will physically fight to redress wrongs, who will fight to have their voices heard and who will go to prison for it. **Dalton** said that the non-mention of unity in Teahon's presentation is essentially a matter of tactics and Sinn Féin is not being asked to abandon its cherished goal.

20 **McGuinness**, in bringing the discussions to a conclusion, repeated that there is 'some very good stuff' in the position as outlined earlier by Teahon. Many Nationalists are now saying that 'the Tánaiste has learned a lot over the years'. Regarding the Taoiseach, there is 'a tangible benefit for nationalists when he is visibly seen to stand up to the British Government'. **O'Hare** again criticised the absence of any reference to Irish unity in Teahon's presentation but **McGuinness** said that the presentation would receive the most careful consideration. The party would be in contact concerning a further meeting soon.

29 May 1996