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**FOR:** MARY BROWNE/EMBASSY, LONDON

**FROM:** C. O'SHEA

**DATE:** 22 May 1997

**PAGES:** 3

Extract of comments by Secretary of State on Newsnight programme

22 May 1997

Commentator Dr Mowlam told Peter Snow that all she sought to do was add momentum to the peace process.

SoS It was neither malicious or intended to create problems for anybody. What we have made a commitment to and Tony Blair made it very specifically in Belfast last Friday is, we want to give the process momentum, we want to move it ahead as quickly as possible.

Interviewer Are you apprehensive after the talks you've had about what might happen in the marching season ?

SoS Slightly, yes, because at the moment there is no mediation, there is no talks going on and a short time span ...

Interviewer But what about your plan for mediation, what about your plan for this Commission which would be able to take an independent view of whether a march should go on or not. Is there any chance you'll have that in place in time ?

SoS Well, the Commission is there now Peter but the problem is that we are going to introduce some legislation, we won't get it through in time for the marches this year and in the end, the kind of criminal acts and offences that we will put in the Act and will make legislation is the end of the process. If you got there, the whole process of trying to get compromise on the marches has not been achieved.

Interviewer If there is a buildup to what looks like a possible danger of violence at Drumcree this year for example, will you be prepared to robustly put in troops to stop and of course the Government didn't do last year ?

SoS Peter, I will continue to avoid questions like that because if I sit here and say I'm going to put the Army in then what encouragement, what incentive is there to the groups on either side to sit down together or through a mediator and try and reach a compromise so that some respect is restored, some trust between the communities. For me to sit here and say, Army, here we come, is no solution at all.

Interviewer Are you prepared to make sure the rule of law is observed whichever side looks like disrupting it and if you have to use troops to do that will you do it ?

SoS I have no trouble saying that I will uphold the rule of law in relation to the marches, it is the commitment I've given all along and however I have to do that, I will do my best to achieve that. I have no difficulty with making that commitment, I fundamentally believe it is what will guide our policy.

Interviewer OK, back to the talks with Sinn Féin, what is the clarification all about, what do you need to be clearer about, what do they need to be clearer about, before talks can begin. You want a ceasefire, what do they need to know so they are speaking ?

SoS Well, they have a number of questions in relations to the process that broke down that we as a new Government will give our answers to and as you well know in Northern Ireland, nothing is a simple straightforward statement. We have said that what we want is an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire before the peace process can go anywhere. We want a commitment to those democratic principles outlined in the Mitchell report.

Interviewer When Sinn Féin say, when we come into the talks, supposing the Unionists walk out, will you go ahead with us, Sinn Féin, and have talks about a settlement without the Unionists in the talks ?

SoS I mean we can paint different scenarios and you know, you are wonderfully negative about the different ones we can have.

Interviewer But it's a fair question isn't it ?

SoS We've got a long way to go and we've got to hold in as many parties as possible and if I start saying now, oh well, if Sinn Féin come in, we'll lose the Unionists, that is the kind of negative approach.

Interviewer But you've said the opposite haven't you. You've said that train is going to leave the station without Sinn Féin, if necessary.

SoS Yes and it will leave the train without Unionists if they go. I mean that is the state of play. However, what we've got to do is, you've got to build respect between the communities, you've got to build trust between the communities and you've got to build confidence between the communities. Now, we will do our best over the days and weeks ahead to do that and if you can achieve that, you can hold everybody in. We can sit here and say we're sure to lose somebody now. I'm not prepared to do that, I'm prepared to give people in Northern Ireland hope and a belief and a chance that there is a future that we will try our best to deliver. We need the cooperation of all the parties in the democratic process to do that, but we will do our best and that is what we ought to offer the people of Northern Ireland now.

END.

*CofS*

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**Clarification by Secretary of State re**  
**question of Unionist participation in talks process**

**22 May 1997**

**Commentator** The Secretary of State, Mo Mowlam, has moved to clear up confusion about her remarks on BBC2 television last night. She had said the talks process might proceed without Unionist participation but, this morning she made it clear that Unionists must take part.

**SoS** The Unionists are crucial to the talks process, the talks process will go nowhere without them but we've made it clear that nobody has a veto in this process. So their participation is essential to it but we must keep that train moving.

END.