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Reference Code: 2021/99/21

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Sept. 1997.

Sinn Féin Confidence Building Agenda

Note: *Following is indicative only, based on a limited selection of Sinn Féin statements, articles, interviews and correspondence.*

A. Equality and Democratic Rights Agenda

(i) **Ending of discrimination in employment** through:

- * clear and comprehensive legal powers to end sectarian discrimination within a defined time;
- * affirmative action with timetables for removing the imbalance in employment rates given the fact that catholic males are still 2.2 times and women 1.7 times more likely to be unemployed than protestants;
- * periodic reviews to assess the effect of fair employment legislation;
- * support for the MacBride Principles;
- * immediate repeal of sections 42 and 57 of the 1989 Fair Employment Act which institutes legalised political discrimination against members of the nationalist community. (Source: Sinn Féin Manifesto, May, 1997).

Action on the SACHR report on jobs discrimination, including

(a) legislative change to:

- extend affirmative actions to cover unemployment and especially the long-term unemployed
- given the FEC a role in recruiting from the long-term unemployed
- extend the scope of contract compliance to include goods and services
- repeal the national security exemptions provisions which is in fact the blatant political vetting of workers
- put PAFT on a statutory basis
- ensure that TSN is taken seriously, ensuring that it is implemented; and

(b) Development of a co-ordinated and integrated strategy involving legislation and economic and social policies (Source: Mr. Adams Irish News article of 28 August, 1997).

(ii) **Equality of treatment in terms of economic development** (Source: Mr. Adams' Irish Times interview of 13 September, 1997).

(iii) Introduction of a "**comprehensive Bill of Rights** to cover civil, political, social, economic, and cultural rights" (Source: Political Report to Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, April, 1997).

- (iv) **Equality of treatment for the Irish culture and identity** including education through the medium of Irish (Source: Mr. Adams letter of 20 June to Prime Minister Blair).

Sinn Féin's position on cultural change was spelt out in some detail in their May 1997 Manifesto which called for the Irish language to have equal status with English and, specifically, for

- * DoE to remove all obstacles to Irish medium education and to place it on a par with integrated schools,
- * Schools with 25 pupils and teaching in the indigenous language to qualify for Government aid.
- * Ending of the banning of Irish from the courts and all levels of public administration.
- * Prisoners to be able to speak Irish during visits and to correspond in the language and for an end to the undue delays in the censoring of Irish language material.

- (v) Confidence building in terms of **handling of contentious marches** (Source: Mr Adams' letter of 20 June, 1997, to British Prime Minister).

B. Demilitarisation Agenda

- (i) **Urgent movement on the release of all political prisoners** (Source: Mr. Adams' interview in I.T. on 13 September, 1997).

- (ii) Pending this,

- * the introduction of a **humane regime** for Irish political prisoners in England jails
- * the **transfer of Irish political prisoners** to jails in Ireland
- * **equality of treatment for all political prisoners** (refers to apparent NIO policy of discrimination against women prisoners)
(Source: Sinn Féin Manifesto of May, 1997)

- (iii) **Repeal of repressive legislation** (Source: Political Report to Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, April, 1997).

- (iv) **End to British Army and RUC operations** (Source: Mr. Adams' 13 September, 1997, I.T. interview).

- (v) **Action on Policing** (Source: Mr. Adams' letter of 21 March to Mr. Hume).

The Political Report to the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis in April 1997 calls for the disbandment of the RUC and RIR.

The Sinn Féin Manifesto of May, 1997 calls for

- the replacement of the RUC by an acceptable interim police service;
- the immediate disarmament of the RUC pending their agreed and orderly disbandment;
- the immediate withdrawal of the RUC from nationalist areas;
- the immediate disbandment of the RUC Special Branch;
- the establishment, through the medium of inclusive peace talks involving all parties and both governments, of an agreed, fully-independent, monitoring agency which would oversee the above.

- (vi) **Banning of Plastic Bullets** (Source: Political Report to Sinn Féin Ard Fheis, April, 1997).
- (vii) **Action on Licensed Weapons** (Mr. Adams' letter of 20 June to Prime Minister Blair).

Further Confidence-Building Measures referred to in International Body's Report

1. The measures in question are:

- * Early termination of paramilitary activities, including surveillance and targeting.
- * Provision of information on the status of missing persons.
- * Return of those who have been forced to leave their communities under threat.
- * Continued actions by the Government on prisoners.
- * Early implementation of the proposed review of emergency legislation, consistent with the evolving security situation.
- * Continued action by the Government on responsive measures advised by their respective security authorities, as the threat reduces.
- * Normalisation of policing as soon as the security situation permits.
- * A review of the situation with respect to legally registered weapons and the use of plastic bullets.
- * Continued progress towards more balanced representation in the police force.
- * An elective process.

* Further progress in the social and economic development of Northern Ireland and its communities.

2. In his letter of 21 March to Mr. Hume, Mr. Adams welcomed the British Government's endorsement of the International Body's report including Chapter VII dealing with confidence building measures and in particular their recommendation that there should be action on:

Prisoners
Emergency legislation
Policing
Plastic bullets
Social and economic issues

He added that all of these issues need speedy action, particularly the issue of prisoners.

3. In his letter of 20 June to Prime Minister Blair, Mr. Adams referred to the need for clarity on how the British Government intended to respond to the suggestions by the International Body for action on prisoners, emergency legislation, licensed weapons, plastic bullets, policing and social and economic issues.