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92% SAY YES

Provos hit out on arms

Exclusive poll on your view of talks

MOST Northern Ireland people want their politicians at the Stormont talks — including a large majority in both main unionist parties.

An opinion poll published today shows that nine out of 10 people — 92% — want the political party they support to find a way to stay at the talks.

That includes 93% of Ulster Unionist supporters — and 76% of DUP voters.

The DUP quit the process in July, while Ulster Unionists will decide this weekend on their talks strategy.

Full-scale negotiations are scheduled to start on Monday at Stormont.

But the arrival of Sinn Féin at the talks table has increased unionist doubts about the process.

Today's opinion poll — undertaken by Queen's Rowntree Trust in association with the Belfast Telegraph and UTV — shows an overwhelming desire in the community for politicians to stick with the talks.

Catholics are more positive about the process than Protestants, with 98% pledging support for the talks, compared to 86% of Protestants.

But the message is clear

By Mark Simpson
Political Correspondent

from both communities — stay in the talks.

This is in spite of a feeling among both the unionist and nationalist communities that the peace process is biased against them.

The survey discovered that this sense of imbalance was felt more acutely by unionists. More than half the Protestant population believe the peace process has heavily favoured republicans.

The survey involved almost 1,000 people — forming a representative sample of the Northern Ireland population — and was carried out by Market Research Northern Ireland over three days last week.

It was announced the previous week by the Govern-

ment that the IRA ceasefire was sufficiently strong to allow Sinn Féin entry to the full talks process.

The poll gauged public feeling on the need for a ceasefire and arms decommissioning before all-party talks. The two communities were found to be deeply divided.

A majority of Protestants said talks without a truce were unacceptable, but Catholics find it more acceptable.

A majority of Catholics were against the proposal that all-party talks should only take place after decommissioning has been completed, yet the idea is attractive to Protestants.

The BBC also published an opinion poll today and it showed the unionist community evenly split over sitting at the negotiating table with Sinn Féin.

Viewpoint, page 14; Poll results, page 15

DO YOU WANT YOUR PARTY TO STAY IN THE TALKS?

	YES	NO
All NI	92	8
Protestant	86	14
Catholic	98	2
DUP	76	24
UUP	93	7
Alliance	99	1
SDLP	99	1
Sinn Féin	100	0

Handover is 'tantamount to surrender'

By Michael Devine
in Dublin

THE IRA today distanced itself from Sinn Féin on the acceptance of the Mitchell Principles.

And a Provo spokesman also ruled out decommissioning — and insisted the principle of consent must be seen in "a 32-county context".

The revelations came in an interview in this week's Republican News.

A spokesperson said his organisation "would have problems with sections of the Mitchell Principles".

He said Sinn Féin was a political party with a very substantial democratic mandate and "what they do is a matter for them".

He added: "But I think all republicans should understand and support them as they do what they believe is right and necessary to bring about a lasting peace."

"Sinn Féin's stated commitment is to secure a peace settlement which both removes the causes of conflict and takes all the guns, British, republican, unionist, nationalist and loyalist, out of Irish politics."

"The Sinn Féin position actually goes beyond the Mitchell Principles. Their affirmation of these principles is therefore quite compatible with their position."

"As to the IRA's attitude to the Mitchell Principles per se, well, the IRA would have problems with sections of the Mitchell Principles. But then the IRA is not a participant in these talks."

The interview is the first given by an IRA representative since the renewal of the ceasefire on July 20.

On the issue of consent,

the IRA spokesperson said the British and unionists had "quite deliberately muddled what should be a clear concept by interpreting consent to mean a political veto".

He accused them of trying to introduce "a new precondition into the equation".

The IRA spokesperson said that their position on decommissioning had not changed "in any way at all".

He said: "I don't think anyone has realistically expected us to agree to decommissioning this side of a political settlement."

"There is no historical precedent in Ireland for such a demand. Those who raised the issue in the first instance and who continue to hype it are interested only in creating an excuse for their own refusal to engage in meaningful negotiations."

He added: "Decommissioning on our part would be tantamount to surrender."

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Diana memorial plans

And PM set to rule out curbs

TONY Blair today was set to rebuff demands to introduce new privacy laws at talks with Princess Diana's brother, Earl Spencer.

Earl Spencer, due to meet the Prime Minister to discuss the planned memorial for the Princess of Wales, is reported to be urging the Government to act to curb Press intrusion.

And Princes William and Harry were back at school today as the Royal Family sought to return their lives to some kind of normality.

St James's Palace confirmed that the Prince of Wales took his sons back to their schools yesterday afternoon.

Prince William (15) went back to Eton while Prince Harry (12) was taken to Ludgrove.

At the weekend, Charles appealed for "time and space" for the young princes to come to terms with the loss of their mother.

The Prince of Wales wants some time and space for the boys so

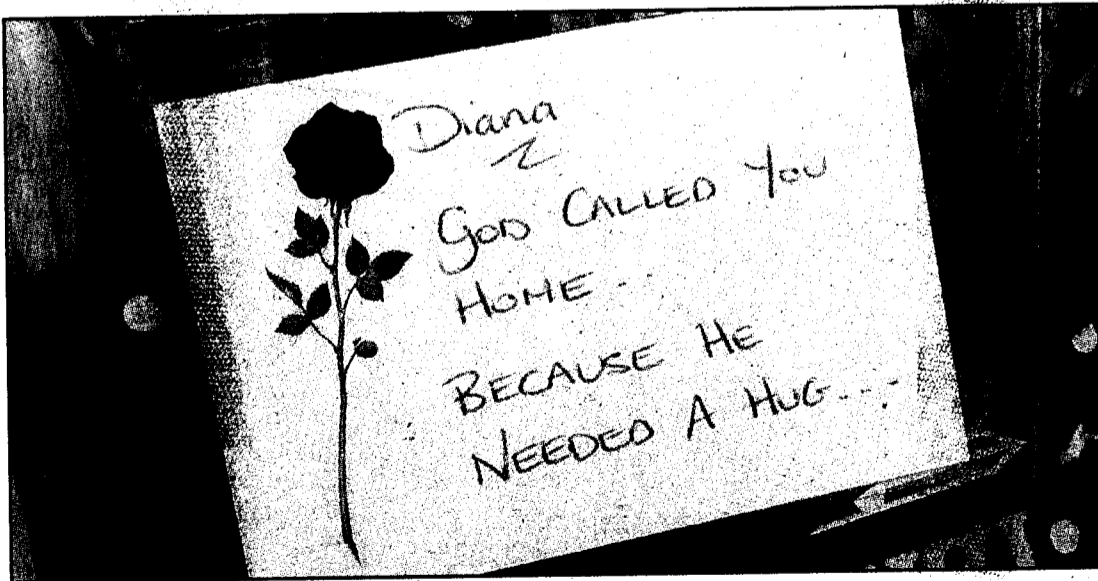
By Desmond McCartan

that they can come to terms with their loss and prepare for the future," he said.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, has warned there should be no media intrusion into the lives of the princes during their school days.

Meanwhile, the massive job of dealing with millions of bouquets and messages left in memory of the Princess of Wales around the nation started today.

In Belfast, thousands of bunches of flowers



Sad tribute: One of the many poignant messages outside Belfast City Hall for Diana, Princess of Wales.

and tributes will be lifted from the City Hall this evening. The messages will be passed on to the Royal Family in due course.

Since his outspoken attack on the media at Westminster Abbey last Saturday, the Earl is said to have been en-

couraged by a strong wave of public support for moves to curb Press intrusion.

He has received 27,000 letters of support in the past two days, the Daily Telegraph reported.

The Earl is said to be

determined to raise the question of fresh legislation, even though the Government — within 24 hours of her death — indicated that was unlikely.

Mr Blair, according to Whitehall sources, prefers tougher self-

regulation by Press proprietors and editors.

Lord Wakeham, chairman of the Press Complaints Commission, has urged all editors to protect Prince William and Prince Harry from intrusion while they are at school.

'Driver should not have been behind wheel'

PAGE 3

Paris may get Diana memorial

PAGE 4

Scotland goes to the polls

PAGE 5

New plastic bullet row rages

PAGE 6

INSIDE
FINANCE P8
LETTERS P14
TV AND RADIO P16/17
CROSSWORD P27

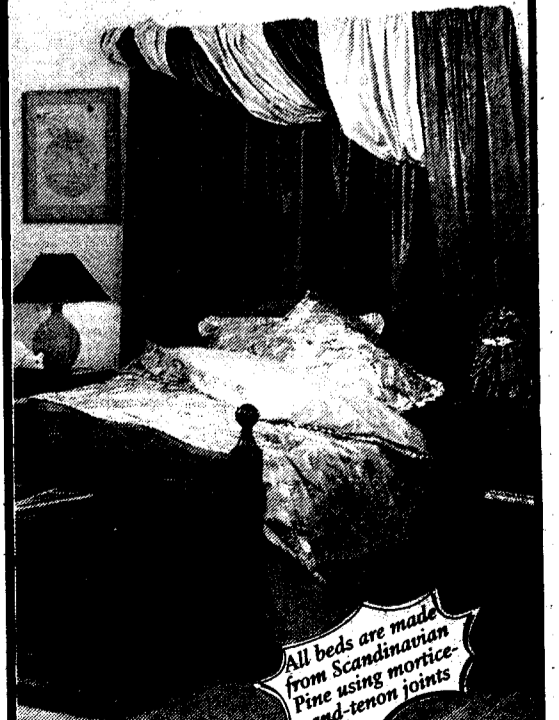
Weather Outlook

GREATER BELFAST AREA: It will be cloudy with showery rain developing by the evening. The rain will continue through until the early hours of the morning and then it will be replaced by drier and clearer weather through until dawn. A moderate westerly wind will veer to the north west. Min temp 8 — 10C. SEE BACK PAGE



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