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## Sinn Féin to table Dáil motion calling for a British Irish summit on collusion

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Sinn Féin Justice Spokesperson Aengus Ó Snodaigh TD has said Sinn Féin will be putting forward a Dáil motion calling for a British Irish summit on collusion. He went on to say "given the seriousness of what has been exposed by Nuala O'Loan and previous Oireachtas and Barron reports, the government needs to set aside at least one full day for debate on the upcoming McEntee report." He said there was concern that the government would try and rush the debate as had happened in relation to the Barr, Nally and Morris reports.

Deputy Ó Snodaigh was speaking this morning at a conference on collusion organised by Sinn Féin that will be addressed by family members and campaigners for victims of British State murder.

He said, "I welcome the commitment given by the Taoiseach to schedule a Dáil debate on collusion following the publication of the McEntee report. Patrick McEntee may present his final report to government as early as this coming Wednesday. I would call on the government to set out now their proposals regarding the duration and format of the debate and the type of action that would follow.

"Last November the Barr Report, Nally Report and Morris Reports were all taken together and this debate was also subjected to a government imposed guillotine. The Dáil spent a total of just 5 hours on some of the most significant reports ever published on the topic of Garda corruption, indiscipline and mis-management. And the Dáil debate on the Moriarty Report which has been scheduled to take place next Wednesday is set to conclude within 90 minutes.

"Given the seriousness of what had been exposed by Nuala O'Loan and previous Oireachtas and Barron reports, the government needs to set aside at least one full day for debate on the upcoming McEntee report. Preferably this debate should take place on a special sitting day to accommodate the families many of whom will wish to travel to Dublin to be in attendance.

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“Previous debates on reports have been reflective in their nature. It is essential that the debate on collusion is focused on how we get the truth – about what the government can and should do. Therefore Sinn Féin will be putting forward and seeking broad political support for a Dáil motion, informed by participants at today’s conference. that recognises the reality of collusion between the British State and loyalist death squads, the suffering and campaigns of victims of such collusion and their relatives, and calls for a British Irish governmental summit on collusion to follow an Oireachtas debate. I will be raising this issue with the government at the whips meeting next week.” ENDS

**Full text of speech:**

We heard earlier this morning from speakers representing the families of collusion victims. I want to pay tribute to them, and to the many others who are not here today, for their courageous and enduring efforts to uncover the truth and achieve justice for their loved ones. Governments here and in Britain, past and present, have colluded in a deep cover-up that masks the truth and this continues to compound the suffering of relatives. Recovering the truth is essential if that suffering is to be lessened.

When Sinn Féin’s Dublin and Leinster Cuigi decided to facilitate a conference on collusion we had a number of objectives. We wanted to use the conference and the publicity surrounding it to raise public awareness of collusion in the 26 counties, to provide an update for those already familiar with some of the cases in terms of where the campaigns are at, and to create an opportunity for the various campaigns to come together and discuss approaches to truth recovery. The focus must be on ‘where to next...’.

I want to address two aspects of truth recovery the first is from a political perspective and the second from a legal point of view.

Politically, the Oireachtas is one site of struggle where the truth recovery agenda can be pursued. I welcome the commitment given by the Taoiseach to schedule a Dáil debate on collusion following the publication of the McEntee report. Patrick McEntee may present his final report to government as early as this coming Wednesday. Now I believe, we must work together to get the maximum out of that commitment in terms of the duration, format and outcome of that debate.

The government are responsible for the Dáil schedule. The Dáil debate on the Moriarty Report has been scheduled to take place next Wednesday and it is to conclude within 90 minutes. Last November the Barr Report, Nally Report and Morris Reports were all taken together and this debate was also subjected to a government imposed guillotine. The Dáil spent a total of just 5 hours on some of the most significant reports ever published on the topic of Garda corruption, indiscipline and mis-management. It is essential that the government allow for a Dáil debate on collusion that is free from any overly restrictive guillotine. The debate should be allowed to last as long as is necessary. At least 8 hours should be devoted to dealing with the issue of collusion this would allow for 18 full speaking slots in addition to the spokespersons slots. Preferably this debate should take place on a special sitting day to accommodate the families many of whom will wish to travel to Dublin to be in attendance.

Previous debates on reports have been reflective in their nature. It is essential that the debate on collusion is action focused. Therefore it should be motion-led. In our view the debate should culminate in the Dáil and Seanad passing a motion that mandates the government to call for an inter-governmental

submit with the British government on the specific issue of collusion and uncovering the truth. I will be making our views on this matter clear to the government at the whips meeting this week.

Now I would like to highlight a legislative development that has significant implications for future truth recovery opportunities. That is the Tribunals of Inquiry Bill. This Bill was published by government in 2005 but has not yet commenced any further through the Oireachtas.

No one can deny we are in need of new legislation to govern the work of tribunals. The existing legislation dates back as far as 1921. And it must be clear to everyone that spiralling legal costs and the refusal of witnesses to cooperate with tribunals needs to be addressed. However, as the Tribunals of Inquiry Bill is currently drafted Sinn Féin must oppose it. Because we believe the proposed legislation could be used by future governments to stop public inquiries from delivering the truth to the public and to the families of victims of collusion in particular.

The Bill as currently drafted is very similar to the British Inquiries Act. That Act is widely viewed as having been constructed to act as a barrier to a full public inquiry taking place into the murder of Pat Finucane. This Bill if passed would not only jeopardise the ability of any future tribunal to uncover the truth surrounding the Dublin and Monaghan bombings and the murders of Seamus Ludlow, Cllr. Eddie Fullerton and Martin Doherty amongst others. It would also undermine the cases of all those in the 6 counties who are seeking inquiries into state collusion because the British government could point to this legislation in order to justify their own.

This government signed an all-party demand for a full inquiry by the British authorities into the collusion surrounding the murder of Pat Finucane – yet their own Tribunals of Inquiry Bill would gravely undermine that demand.

This Bill would effectively give the government power over whether to establish a Tribunal of Inquiry at all, its members and crucially its terms of reference. It would also effectively give the government the power to suspend or dissolve a Tribunal for unlimited reasons and to prevent the publication of a Tribunal's report. In our view this is completely unacceptable and will not instil any confidence amongst either the general public or more crucially those who have been specifically affected and are seeking the full truth about events.

I wrote to the Minister for Justice Michael McDowell outlining our concerns last October and I know Sinn Féin's leadership team raised it with the Tánaiste and Taoiseach last November.

The relatives and those representing victims of collusion have long sought full, independent and public inquiries. I believe we must work together to ensure that no legislation is introduced that would jeopardise and compromise the independence of future inquiries that we have been seeking for so long.

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