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Will he or won't he???



Irish Prime Minister, Bertie Ahern

The vexed question of whether or not Bertie Ahern will enter a coalition with Sinn Fein after the next general election in the Irish Republic

Irish Justice Minister, Michael McDowell, believes that prime minister Bertie Ahern will go into government with Sinn Fein should that party become “kingmakers” after the next general election in the Republic. He says Sinn Fein will attempt to subvert democracy by using the proceeds of crime to try to put itself into power at the next election.

In an interview in an Irish newspaper, Mr. McDowell says it makes political sense for Mr. Ahern to look at the Labour Party as an alternative government partner, if Fianna Fail and the Progressive Democrats don't get the numbers required. He described Mr. Ahern's approach as “basic ground politics”. In that event, the PDs would be open to a coalition with Fine Gael, but there would be ideological and political difficulties with the Labour Party, which would have to change before the PDs would share government with them.

Asked if keeping Sinn Fein out of government was still a valid reason to vote PD, given the prime minister's assurance that he would not go into government with Sinn Fein, Mr. McDowell said: “If Sinn Fein got 12 seats in the next Dail, and if they were pivotal seats, which represented the balance of power, they would be - to use Martin McGuinness's phrase - kingmakers.” Whatever people say in advance about what they would or would not do, doesn't correspond with what happens afterwards.” On the prospect of Sinn Fein in government, Mr. McDowell said: “SF remains a party ideologically committed to the IRA. I believe the IRA is in possession of a massive amount of money and it intends to use that money for the purposes of the Provisional movement.” Those purposes now are to get power by political means.

The Army Council of the IRA still exists and the funds that the IRA put in are still in place.” Their resources are very substantial. They are available for the subversion of democracy (through SF promoting itself during an election). They are one of the wealthiest organisations.”

In what is seen as a response to the Justice Minister's comments, Dublin prime minister, Bertie Ahern, has reiterated his determination not to go into government with Sinn Fein after next year's general election.

Mr. Ahern has again emphasised that his difficulties with Sinn Fein are policy-related ones — on taxation and Europe. He had said earlier in the year that he would take Fianna Fáil into opposition rather than do



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a deal with Sinn Fein - because of its stance on conflicting issues. Several FF TDs publicly backed up the Taoiseach's comments on that occasion and there was widespread support in the parliamentary party for his position. Mr. Ahern has now moved quickly to end any speculation that he might change his approach to join forces with Sinn Fein.

A spokeswoman for the Taoiseach said last night that Mr. Ahern had made his position clear on this "time and time again".

It has to be noted that the differences listed by Ahern as standing in the way of a coalition with Sinn Fein are "taxation and Europe"! Sinn Fein's links with terror and murder through the IRA and ongoing links with criminality are not given a mention. That is a most ominous omission!