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Reference Code: 2021/99/13

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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR

Telephone: 0171-235 2171

Direct Line: 0171-201 2

Fax: 0171-245 6961

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[Handwritten scribble]

FAX

14 May 1997

To Anglo Irish ---please copy Press

From C Wrafter, London

Copied Joint Secretariat

QUEEN'S SPEECH

Follows "Background Notes" prepared by the NIO press office which expand on the contents of the Queen's Speech.

(14 pages in all)

PST, PSS
S/S Ó hUiginn
Counsellors A-I Section
Messrs. Teahon, Donlon & Dalton
Ambassadors London & Washington
~~Joint Secretary~~

Section

14-MAY-97 WED 14:11

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BACKGROUND NOTE

RECONCILIATION AND POLITICAL SETTLEMENT

"In Northern Ireland my Government will seek reconciliation and a political settlement which has broad support, working in co-operation with the Irish government."

The Government will strive to achieve a political settlement in Northern Ireland through the multi party talks which are due to resume in Belfast on 3 June 1997.

The Government will pursue a range of initiatives designed to build confidence and reconciliation throughout the community, contributing to broad support for a political settlement.

A settlement would need to be based on consent throughout the community. The Government has reiterated its support for the principle of consent to changes in Northern Ireland's constitutional status: Northern Ireland would not cease to be part of the United Kingdom without the clear and formal consent of the majority of the people who live there.

The Government will maintain close co-operation with the Irish government in seeking agreement on relationships between London and Dublin and within the island of Ireland. The Government is committed to the Anglo-Irish Agreement (published by HMSO, 15 November 1985, Cmnd No 9690), the Joint Declaration (published 15 December 1993) and the Framework Documents (published 22 February 1995).

Press Office
Northern Ireland Office
11 Millbank
London SW1P 4QE
Tel: 0171 210 6473

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BACKGROUND NOTE

COUNTER TERRORISM LEGISLATION

"My Government will work to build trust and confidence in Northern Ireland by bringing forward legislation to deal with terrorism."

The Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1996 expires on 24 August 1998. As there can be no question of leaving the security forces without the means necessary to counter terrorism, its replacement in some form is a priority.

The Bill which will be brought forward would replace, ~~re-enact~~ (with amendments) or re-enact in part the current Act and make provision for the preservation of peace and the maintenance of order in Northern Ireland, taking into account the prevailing security situation.

The final contents of the Bill will depend on decisions to be taken in conjunction with the Home Office in relation to the whole range of anti-terrorist legislation.

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BACKGROUND NOTEPARADES LEGISLATION

"...legislation to reduce tension over parades,..."

The Government is committed to the recommendations of the North Report, which it considers to have been a detailed, careful and even-handed assessment of the parades issue. (The North Report: Independent Review of Parades and Marches, published by HMSO, 30 January 1997, ISBN 0 337 03078 2).

The Government will bring forward legislation to implement in full the recommendations of the North Report. The Bill would establish the Parades Commission as a body corporate. The Commission would take over from the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) the responsibility for making decisions on contested parades. The Parades Commission's current role is limited to mediation and education.

The Bill would allow the Parades Commission to take into account the wider effects of parades on inter-community relations instead of concentrating solely on implications for public order.

The Bill would provide a code of conduct regulating the conduct of marchers and protesters and create a new offence of incitement to defy the Commission's ruling. The Commission would come to its decisions following consultation with the police.

The Chief Constable of the RUC would have the right to refer Parades Commission decisions to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and the police would also retain a power to impose conditions on a parade if a public order situation made it impossible to enforce a Parades Commission ruling.

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BACKGROUND NOTE**INCORPORATION OF THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

"...measures to protect human rights..."

The Government is committed to incorporating the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) into UK law.

The Home Office will be the lead Department for the legislation on incorporation of the ECHR, but the Government will also be considering a number of matters relating specifically to Northern Ireland. The consultation paper *Bringing Rights Home* (published by Jack Straw MP and Paul Boateng MP, December 1996) explains the Government's commitment to the ECHR in more detail. It makes the following points specifically about Northern Ireland:

- incorporation of the ECHR will be a valuable step in protecting basic human rights;

there is a need to develop specific rights protections to deal with the unique problems of the divided community in Northern Ireland; and

there must be discussions with the Irish Government to provide reassurance to both unionists and nationalists that civil, cultural and religious rights will be protected at present and in the future.

The protection of human rights is a matter that is likely to be considered in the Northern Ireland political talks as part of a political settlement.

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BACKGROUND NOTE**ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL****"To combat discrimination in the workplace"**

The Government is fully committed to equality of opportunity and the elimination of all forms of discrimination in employment. The fair employment legislation, which is the strongest anti-discrimination legislation in Europe, ensures equality of opportunity in job selection and promotion, and following the Employment Equality Review being conducted by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, which is due to report shortly, the Government will consider whether any further legislative action may be appropriate.

A Commission for Racial Equality, under the terms of the new Race Relations Order, will shortly be established in Northern Ireland.

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BACKGROUND NOTE

POLICING REFORM

"To increase confidence in policing"

The Government is committed to maintaining and enhancing the high standards of service delivered by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC). To further increase confidence the Government is undertaking a programme of reform.

We aim to ensure the police service in Northern Ireland is a service for everyone, is representative of the people and commands their respect and confidence, and is accountable through a strong Police Authority.

This is an important and sensitive issue; progress must be made.

We will move forward with reform on the police complaints system, implementing the recommendations of the independent report by Dr Maurice Hayes (A Police Ombudsman for Northern Ireland?, published by HMSO, January 1997, ISBN No 0 337 03077 4), and on the police structural issues

which we outlined in our 1996 consultation paper (*Foundations for Policing* White Paper, published by HMSO, May 1996, Cmnd 3249).

These will be first steps. We are considering others such as reform of Community Police Liaison Committees, and of the composition and method of appointment to the Police Authority.

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BACKGROUND NOTE

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL

"To foster economic development"

The Government will continue to give a high priority to ~~strengthening~~ the economy and will continue to pursue its economic development strategy for Northern Ireland. This aims to generate the higher levels of economic growth that are necessary to create and sustain long-term employment. The core of the approach is to help more Northern Ireland companies achieve international levels of competitiveness.

The Industrial Development Board (IDB), the Local Enterprise Development Unit (LEDU) and the Industrial, Research and Technology Unit (IRTU) will work towards this aim by helping companies that have the potential to grow to improve their performance in areas such as quality, design, innovation, productivity, management expertise and entrepreneurial flair. IDB will also continue with its efforts to attract inward investment projects to Northern Ireland. The Training and Employment Agency (T&EA) will work to increase the skills of the Northern Ireland workforce through a range of programmes and will pay particular attention to the problems faced by the

long-term unemployed. The Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) will continue its efforts to increase the contribution made by tourism to the development of the economy. All of the economic development agencies will seek to spread the benefits of growth widely through their commitment to the Targeting Social Needs initiative.

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