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Prime Minister's Press Conference in New York,23 October, 1970

The Prime Minister gave the following answers to questions on Northern Ireland at his press conference here today:

"I have known Mr. Lynch for some time. We have had talks on previous occasions but I had a very useful one with him in New York. We announced afterwards that we would meet again next year and discuss any outstanding problems and we can of course meet from time to time when the situation requires it. As far as Northern Ireland is concerned, the Government of Major Chichester-Clark is going through this programme of reforms. We are backing him in doing this. He is quite determined to see it through. And when that is carried through, as it will be quite shortly, then there will not be any grounds for complaint on discrimination or any other basis as far as Northern Ireland is concerned. Then we shall have a situation which is evident in some of the cities today in which there are people who are not setting out to solve a problem. What they are doing is using violence for their own purposes. As for a long-term solution, the position of the Westminster Government remains what it has always been, that the Constitution of Northern Ireland remains as embodied in the Act until the people of Northern Ireland themselves want to change it. If they do it is up to them and we in Westminster would certainly not stand in their way. But it does mean that

any change in the constitutional position has got to be brought about by the wishes of the people".

2. Asked about the possibility of a new initiative, the Prime Minister said:

"I do not believe that you deal with a situation which is as deep-seated as that one is by any sort of gimmick or taking any new initiative. I have made it absolutely plain that we shall back Major Chichester-Clark in carrying through these reforms. And I think the minority in Northern Ireland when they see the reforms accomplished, will realize that there are no grounds for complaint there and it is a question of both Protestants and Catholics learning more and more to live together."