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FRIDAY

24TH MARCH 1972

MR HEATH ON NORTHERN IRELAND - SUPPLEMENTARIES

FOLLOWING IS TEXT OF SUPPLEMENTARY QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOLLOWING PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT IN THE COMMONS TODAY. (SEE VS104).

MR. HAROLD WILSON: IN THE VERY GRAVE SITUATION THAT THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN HAS DESCRIBED, THE GOVERNMENT ARE ENTITLED TO ASK FOR THE FULL SUPPORT OF THE HOUSE IN THE COURSE THEY HAVE RIGHTLY - RELUCTANTLY, OF COURSE - DECIDED UPON. ON BEHALF OF MY RIGHT HONOURABLE AND HONOURABLE FRIENDS, THE PRIME MINISTER SHOULD KNOW THAT WE WILL GIVE EVERY FACILITY FOR GETTING THE LEGISLATION THROUGH.

THERE ARE TWO REASONS WHY I PLEDGE OUR BACKING. THE FIRST RELATES TO THE POLICY WHOSE ACCEPTANCE THE GOVERNMENT SOUGHT IN THEIR DISCUSSIONS WITH THE NORTHERN IRELAND GOVERNMENT. IT IS TRUE THAT ON MONDAY WE STRONGLY CRITICISED THE LONG DELAY DURING WHICH TIME RESISTANCE WAS BUILT UP, ORGANISED AND, INDEED, ARMED. WE CAN ARGUE - AND HISTORY, PERHAPS, WILL HAVE A VIEW - WHETHER THESE PROPOSALS, EARLIER, MIGHT HAVE HAD A BETTER CHANCE. WE WOULD HAVE. BUT, AS FAR AS THEY WENT, WE WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED THEM, TRIED TO BUILD ON THEM AND DEVELOPED THEM. BUT WE WOULD HAVE SUPPORTED THEM, BECAUSE THEY SEEM TO US TO HAVE INCORPORATED THE TWO STRATEGIC REQUIREMENTS WE HAVE BEEN PRESSING ON THE GOVERNMENT SINCE LAST AUTUMN, NAMELY, THE TRANSFER OF SECURITY FROM STORMONT TO WESTMINSTER, AND QUICK ACTION ON INTERNMENT., AND THIS WAS RIGHT.

WE WELCOME THE PROPOSAL FOR A RESIDENT CABINET MINISTER. I SHALL COME TO THAT IN A MOMENT. BUT THAT IS, I TAKE IT, IN THE NEW SITUATION THAT THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN HAS NOW PUT FORWARD. THIS PACKAGE WAS WELL DIRECTED IN OUR VIEW, AND WE WOULD HAVE WISHED TO SUPPORT IT HAD IT BEEN ACCEPTED.

INEVITABLE

SECONDLY, THE BILL IS NOW INEVITABLE. DIRECT RULE HAS ALWAYS BEEN REGARDED BY BOTH GOVERNMENTS, AND BY BOTH OF US IN OPPOSITION, AS THE VERY LAST RESORT, NOT AN OBJECTIVE TO BE SOUGHT FOR ITSELF, AND WE HAVE ALL OF US MAINTAINED THIS. BUT THE FACT THAT THAT LAST RESORT WAS THERE AND THAT IN THE LAST RESORT NEITHER OF THE GOVERNMENTS THAT HAVE BEEN CONCERNED WITH THIS WOULD HAVE FLINCHED FROM IT. THAT, I BELIEVE, HAS BEEN A CENTRAL ELEMENT IN THE STRENGTH OF THIS HOUSE AND OF HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT IN DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM.

I WANT TO RAISE THE QUESTION OF THE BILL. A FEW WEEKS AGO WE GAVE ALL FACILITIES FOR PASSING THE NORTHERN IRELAND BILL THROUGH ALL ITS STAGES IN ONE DAY. THAT WAS AN IRREGULAR AND HIGHLY EXCEPTIONAL PROCEDURE. WILL THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN CONFIRM THAT THE HOUSE IS NOT BEING ASKED TO DO ANYTHING UNPRECEDENTED OR IRREGULAR IN REGARD TO THE BILL THAT WILL BE LAID?

CONSTITUTIONAL IMPORTANCE

AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THE BILL IS VERY SHORT, THOUGH OF MASSIVE CONSTITUTIONAL IMPORTANCE. I UNDERSTAND THAT FOR TECHNICAL REASONS IT CANNOT BE LAID TODAY, BUT PERHAPS THE RIGHT HON GENTLEMAN WILL CONFIRM THAT THE TEXT OF IT WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR ALL HONOURABLE MEMBERS TO STUDY TODAY. THAT MEANS THAT THERE WILL BE ADEQUATE TIME FOR A DEBATE NEXT WEEK, FOR CONSIDERING, TABLING AND DEBATING ANY AMENDMENTS WHICH HON. MEMBERS IN ANY PART OF THE HOUSE REGARD AS NEEDED.

WE BELIEVE THAT THE GOVERNMENT ARE ENTITLED TO SUPPORT IN THE AIM OF GETTING THE BILL ON THE STATUTE BOOK, AN ESSENTIAL STABILISING FORCE IN WHAT LOOKS LIKE BEING A VERY DIFFICULT AND DANGEROUS EASTER PERIOD.

MY ONE DOUBT ABOUT THE STATEMENT IS THE REFERENCE TO PLEBISCITES, PARTICULARLY AT THIS TIME, IT WOULD BE EXTREMELY DANGEROUS TO STIR UP PASSION ON ALL SIDES IN THE POLITICAL SITUATION, AND IF THERE IS TO BE ANY FURTHER RESTRICTION OF MARCHES OR PUBLIC MEETINGS, IT MIGHT MAKE IT AN UNSUITABLE BACKGROUND FOR A PLEBISCITE.

FINALLY, AS I UNDERSTAND IT, THESE ARE TEMPORARY POWERS, RENEWABLE AFTER ONE YEAR. ALL OF US RECOGNISE THAT THIS ACTION DOES NOT, OF ITSELF, SOLVE ANY OF THE PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN IRELAND., IT MERELY CREATES A NEW STAGE OR SETTING IN WHICH THE SOLUTION OF PROBLEMS, WHICH ARE AS URGENT AS EVER, HAS TO BE SOUGHT.

CONFERENCE

IT IS URGENT THAT THE PERIOD IMMEDIATELY AHEAD BE USED FOR THIS PURPOSE. FOR THIS, THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN WILL NOT BE SURPRISED TO KNOW THAT WE WOULD PROPOSE THAT THE PROBLEMS WILL NOT BE SOLVED PURELY BY CONTACTS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS - THERE WILL NOT BE A GOVERNMENT IN STORMONT. THIS IS NOW THE OCCASION FOR A SET CONFERENCE AND ALL PARTY TALKS BETWEEN ALL PARTIES HERE AND ALL SELECTED PARTIES IN STORMONT, AND THE FULLEST PROGRAMME OF CONSULTATION WITH ALL THE IRISH PARTIES IN THE DAIL.

ON A PERSONAL NOTE, MAY I SAY TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN THAT SOME OF US WILL KNOW WHAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES HAVE BEEN UP AGAINST IN THE SENSE OF PERSONAL STRAIN AND ANXIETY. THIS HAS NOT BEEN AN EASY DECISION. WE UNDERSTAND THAT. THE SAME IS TRUE OF MR. FAULKNER AND HIS COLLEAGUES DURING THIS DIFFICULT PERIOD.

WE SHALL BE SORRY TO LOSE THE LORD PRESIDENT AS LEADER OF THE HOUSE. HE HAS SERVED THE HOUSE WELL, ALL OF US WILL WISH HIM WELL IN THE NEW AND ARDUOUS AND TREMENDOUS TASK THAT HE HAS TAKEN ON.

GRAVITY

THE PRIME MINISTER: I THANK THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION FOR HIS REMARKS. IT IS BECAUSE WE HAVE ALL ALONG REALISED THE GRAVITY OF THE NATURE OF SUCH A DECISION THAT IT HAS BEEN SO CAREFULLY AND, AS THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN WOULD SAY, SO LENGTHILY CONSIDERED BY MY COLLEAGUES AND MYSELF, AND IN DISCUSSION WITH THE PRIME MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND.

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN IS RIGHT IN SAYING THAT THE BILL TO BE PLACED BEFORE PARLIAMENT IS FOR TEMPORARY PROVISIONS FOR THE YEAR WHICH I HAVE ANNOUNCED, AND IT IS RENEWABLE BY AFFIRMATIVE ORDER IF PARLIAMENT SO DECIDES. WE DO NOT PROPOSE TO ADOPT THE PROCEDURE WE LAST ADOPTED ON THE SHORT NORTHERN IRELAND ACT. WE SHALL GIVE NOTICE OF THE BILL TODAY AND PRESENT IT ON MONDAY.

THE DRAFT BILL IS NOW AVAILABLE IN THE VOTE OFFICE AND IN THE OTHER PLACE. ALL MEMBERS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO IT OVER THE WEEKEND AND ON MONDAY SO THAT THEY CAN GIVE PROPER CONSIDERATION TO IT BEFORE THE HOUSE IS ASKED TO DISCUSS IT ON TUESDAY. MY RIGHT HON FRIEND THE PATRONAGE SECRETARY WILL MAKE AN ANNOUNCEMENT ABOUT BUSINESS FOR NEXT WEEK.

PLEBISCITE

WE THINK THAT THE DECISION GIVES AN OPPORTUNITY NOW FOR A BREAKTHROUGH TO LOWER TENSION AND MAKE A FRESH START. OF COURSE, IT IS RIGHT THAT A PLEBISCITE SHOULD NOT BE HELD UNTIL THAT IS POSSIBLE. I SAID IN MY STATEMENT THAT IT WOULD BE HELD AS SOON AS PRACTICABLE. WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO DO IS TO REDUCE TENSION AND NOT TAKE ANY ACTION LIKELY TO EXACERBAE FEELINGS. THIS MUST BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT ON THE TIMING OF THE PLEBISCITE.

MR. CHICHESTER-CLARK: IS MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND AWARE THAT IF THERE IS A TIME FOR RANCOUR, BITTERNESS, RECRIMINATION AND QUESTIONING OF THE DECISION HE HAS JUST ANNOUNCED, RESPONSIBLE PEOPLE EVERYWHERE WILL REALISE THAT THAT TIME IS NOT TODAY, BECAUSE IN THE WEEKEND AND THE WEEKS AHEAD THE PEOPLE WHO MUST BE MOST IN OUR THOUGHTS ARE THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND.

WILL MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND RECOGNISE THAT THERE ARE MANY, PROBABLY EVEN IN THIS HOUSE, WHO BELIEVE THAT RATHER THAN THE STEPS WHICH HAVE BEEN ANNOUNCED IT WOULD HAVE BEEN PERHAPS A BETTER AND FRANKER APPROACH TO GO FOR COMPLETE INTEGRATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM? HAS MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND ANY FORM OF ASSURANCE OR ANY INDICATION FROM THOSE WHO HAVE SO FAR REFUSED TO COME FORWARD AND HELP IN FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF NORTHERN IRELAND THAT THEY WILL NOW DO SO AS A RESULT OF THIS SO-CALLED INITIATIVE?

DOES HE REALISE THAT THE DECISION EMPHASISES SOMETHING WHICH MANY OF US HAVE RECOGNISED FOR A LONG TIME, THE VERY GREAT CONSTITUTIONAL DIFFICULTIES OF BEING A MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT FOR NORTHERN IRELAND IN THIS HOUSE, BECUASE OF THE INTER-ACTION BETWEEN THE TWO GOVERNMENTS?

DOES HE REALISE THAT, WHATEVER SOME OF US MAY THINK, THERE WILL BE SOME WHO WILL FEEL BOUND TO CONSIDER VERY CAREFULLY AND VERY SERIOUSLY WHETHER THEY HAVE ANY MANDATE TO SUPPORT SUCH A DECISION OR INDEED A MANDATE TO REMAIN IN THIS PARLIAMENT?

CONSULTATION

THE PRIME MINISTER: THE WHOLE HOUSE APPRECIATES THE PART MY HONOURABLE FRIEND HAS PLAYED IN THE PAST IN TRYING TO BRING ABOUT A PEACEFUL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF NORTHERN IRELAND, AND WE WISH TO PAY TRIBUTE TO HIM FOR THAT.

THE DECISION HAS BEEN TAKEN ONLY IN CONSULTATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND. THERE HAVE BEEN NO CONSULTATIONS ABOUT IT WITH OTHERS. I HOPE THAT, IN THE LIGHT OF THE DECISIONS WHICH HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT HAVE TAKEN AND WHICH THEY WILL ASK PARLIAMENT TO IMPLEMENT NEXT WEEK, THERE WILL BE A RESPONSE FROM BOTH COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND, AND FROM THOSE WHO ARE CONCERNED WITH THESE AFFAIRS SOUTH OF THE BORDER, WHICH I HOPE WILL LEAD TO A REDUCTION IN TENSION AND TO THE SEIZING OF THE OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE A FRESH START.

I WELL KNOW - MANY OF US HAVE APPRECIATED OVER NEARLY TWENTY YEARS - THE DIFFICULTIES SOME OF THE MEMBERS REPRESENTING CONSTITUENCIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE FACED WITH THE DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN TWO PARLIAMENTS AND TWO GOVERNMENTS. BUT I SHOULD LIKE TO ASSURE MY HONOURABLE FRIEND THAT EVERYONE IN THE HOUSE WILL VALUE WHAT HE HAS TO CONTRIBUTE IN THE FUTURE IN THIS NEW SITUATION UNTIL WE CAN REACH A LONGER-TERM SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEMS OF THE PROVINCE.

IN PEACE

SIR GEOFFREY DE FREITAS: IS THE PRIME MINISTER AWARE THAT THERE ARE IN MY CONSTITUENCY MORE PEOPLE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND THAN IN ANY OTHER CONSTITUENCY IN GREAT BRITAIN, AND THAT THESE MEN AND WOMEN, BOTH PROTESTANT AND CATHOLIC, LIVE AND WORK SIDE BY SIDE AND IN PEACE?

IS HE AWARE THAT THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THESE PEOPLE HOPE THAT ALL PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WILL CO-OPERATE WITH WESTMINSTER AND THUS AVOID THE POSSIBILITY OF HANDING OVER THEIR BROTHERS AND SISTERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO THE EXTREMISTS ON ONE SIDE OR THE OTHER?

THE PRIME MINISTER: I AM SURE THERE ARE A GREAT NUMBER OF PEOPLE - INDEED THE MAJORITY - IN BOTH COMMUNITIES IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHO WANT TO LIVE TOGETHER. I HOPE THIS DECISION WILL GIVE THE OPPORTUNITY OF REACHING AN AGREEMENT ABOUT THE FUTURE NATURE OF THE GOVERNMENT IN THE PROVINCE WHICH WILL ENABLE THEM TO DO JUST THAT.

SIR D. WALKER-SMITH: SINCE ALL HISTORY SHOWS THE EXTREME DIFFICULTY AS WELL AS THE UNDESIRABILITY OF DIRECT RULE IN A GEOGRAPHICALLY SEPARATED COUNTRY WITHOUT THE FULL-HEARTED AND UNCONSCRIPTED CONSENT OF THE PEOPLE, WILL MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE LORD PRESIDENT, WHOM WE ALL WISH WELL IN HIS ENDEAVOURS, MAKE A SPECIAL POINT OF SEEKING THE CO-OPERATION OF THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND AS A WHOLE, INCLUDING IN PARTICULAR THOSE ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHO HAVE CONSCIENTIOUSLY STRIVEN TO DO THEIR DUTY ACCORDING TO THEIR LIGHTS?

I HAVE TWO BRIEF QUESTION ON THE OTHER POINTS.

FIRST, WILL MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND CONFIRM THAT THE PLEBISCITES WILL NOT SUPERSEDE THE PROVISIONS OF THE NINETEEN FORTYNINE ACT AND WILL BE CONSULTATIVE ONLY?

SECOND, IN PHASING OUT THE INTERNMENT, WILL HE ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT THOSE INTERNEES AGAINST WHOM CHARGES CAN PROPERLY LIE WILL BE PROCEEDED AGAINST IN THE COURTS, SO THAT THIS IS SEEN TO BE A DETERRENT TO TERRORISM AND NOT AN ENCOURAGEMENT OR CONDONEMENT OF IT ?

COURTS

THE PRIME MINISTER: YES, SIR. I CAN ASSURE MY RIGHT HONOURABLE AND LEARNED FRIEND THAT IN ALL CASES WHERE IT IS POSSIBLE TO BRING A CASE IN THE COURTS THIS WILL BE DONE. PARLIAMENT IN STORMONT IS PROROGUED. THEREFORE THE UNDERTAKING, THE CLAUSE IN THE NINETEEN FORTYNINE ACT REMAINS FULLY OPERATIVE, WHICH IS THE SECOND ASSURANCE FOR WHICH MY RIGHT HONOURABLE AND LEARNED FRIEND ASKED. I AM SURE THAT MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE LORD PRESIDENT IN HIS NEW CAPACITY WILL DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO SECURE THE CO-OPERATION OF ALL PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

ALTHOUGH NORTHERN IRELAND MAY BE SEPARATED GEOGRAPHICALLY, AS MY HONOURABLE AND LEARNED FRIEND SAID, WE HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INSISTENT, AND SO FAR THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE ALWAYS BEEN INSISTENT THAT THEY ARE PART OF THE UNITED KINGDOM EQUAL IN EVERY WAY TO THE OTHER PARTS OF THE UNITED KINGDOM. IN OUR VIEW THIS REMAINS THE CASE UNTIL, IF IT SHOULD HAPPEN AT SOME FUTURE TIME A MAJORITY DECIDE THAT THEY WISH THE POSITION TO BE OTHERWISE. WHAT WE ARE DOING IS TO CREATE BOTH AN ASSURANCE AND AN OPPORTUNITY THROUGH THE PLEBISCITE THAT THAT POSITION WILL BE HELD.

NO ALTERNATIVE

MR. THORPE: IS THE PRIME MINISTER AWARE THAT, FACED WITH THE UNWILLINGNESS OF STORMONT TO TRANSFER RESPONSIBILITY FOR LAW AND ORDER TO THIS HOUSE, HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT HAD NO ALTERNATIVE BUT TO FOLLOW THE COURSE THEY HAVE TAKEN?

AS WE MOVE INTO A VERY TENSE SITUATION, PARTICULARLY IN THE NEXT FEW DAYS DOES THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN AGREE THAT ALL SECTIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND SHOULD REALISE THAT THIS NEW OPPORTUNITY MIGHT ALSO BE THE LAST CHANCE?

DOES HE AGREE THAT PEOPLE IN THIS COUNTRY WOULD NOT TAKE KINDLY TO ANY BODY OF OPINION IN NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH SOUGHT TO BOYCOTT THE ADVISORY COMMISSION HIS RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE LORD PRESIDENT IS TO EMPANEL, AND THAT WE HOPE THAT ALL SECTIONS OF THE COMMUNITY WILL CO-OPERATE TO MAKE IT WORK?

ON A MORE PERSONAL NOTE, IS THE PRIME MINISTER AWARE THAT THE LORD PRESIDENT SETS OUT ON THE MOST ARDUOUS AND DANGEROUS TASK OF HIS CAREER HE WILL TAKE WITH HIM THE GOOD WISHES AND I BELIEVE THE PRAYERS OF THE WHOLE HOUSE?

THE PRIME MINISTER: I AM SURE THAT IS THE CASE. THE RIGHT HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN HAS EMPHASISED THAT THIS IS AN ADVISORY COMMISSION, IT IS NOT GOVERNMENT BY COMMISSION. IT IS AN ADVISORY BODY ASSISTING THE LORD PRESIDENT WHO WILL HAVE ITS POWER AND BE RESPONSIBLE TO THIS HOUSE. IN THIS RESPECT IT IS SIMILAR TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES OF MANY KINDS WHICH MINISTERS HAVE IN BRITAIN, WHETHER THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR SCOTLAND, THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR WALES OR MINISTERS AT WESTMINSTER.

I VERY MUCH HOPE THAT A FULLY REPRESENTATIVE BODY CAN BE FOUND TO ASSIST THE LORD PRESIDENT.

TRIBUTE

I WOULD AGAIN LIKE TO PAY TRIBUTE TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND BECAUSE AS HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES KNOW I FULLY APPRECIATE THEIR POSITION WHICH IS THAT THEY DO NOT BELIEVE THAT AS A GOVERNMENT IT WAS POSSIBLE TO ARRANGE FOR THE TRANSFER OF THESE POWERS AND TO MAINTAIN THE SUPPORT OF THEIR PARTY IN THEIR HOUSE.

I FULLY UNDERSTAND THAT POSITION AND ULTIMATELY THE RESPONSIBILITY COMES TO WESTMINSTER AND HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT. WE HAVE ACCEPTED THAT RESPONSIBILITY. AT THE SAME TIME THE PRIME MINISTER OF NORTHERN IRELAND IS GIVING A SPLENDID EXAMPLE TO EVERYONE IN THE PROVINCE OF FULL CO-OPERATION IN SAYING THAT HE AND HIS COLLEAGUES WILL REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL LEGISLATION HERE IS PASSED SO THAT THE CHANGEOVER CAN BE PERFECTLY SMOOTH AND NORMAL.

'IRA VICTORY'

CAPT ORR: WHILE I AGREE WITH MY HON FRIEND THE MEMBER FOR LONDONDERRY (MR. CHICHESTER-CLARK) THAT IT IS IMPORTANT THAT WE SHOULD SPEAK WITH MODERATION BECAUSE HUMAN LIVES ARE AT STAKE I MUST TELL THIS HOUSE THAT WE WOULD BE UNREALISTIC IF WE DO NOT REALISE THAT WHAT HAS HAPPENED WILL BE LOOKED UPON BY THE MAJORITY IN ULSTER AS A VICTORY FOR THE I.R.A. (HON MEMBERS : ''NONSENSE.'')

WE WOULD BE UNREALISTIC IF WE DID NOT REALISE THAT WAS THE CASE, THAT WHATEVER BE THE MERITS OR DEMERITS OF A LOCAL PARLIAMENT, WHATEVER BE THE MERITS OR DEMERITS OF DIRECT RULE, ABOUT WHICH PEOPLE CAN ARGUE, THE BRINGING ABOUT OF A CONSTITUTIONAL CRISIS AND THE IMPOSITION OF DIRECT RULE AGAINST THE WISHES OF THE MAJORITY CAN ONLY BE DESCRIBED AS AN ACT OF FOLLY.

THE PRIME MINISTER: I HOPE THAT ON REFLECTION MY HON AND LEARNED FRIEND WILL NOT CONTINUE TO HOLD THAT VIEW. THIS IS A TIME TO INVITE ALL THOSE INVOLVED IN POLITICAL LIFE IN NORTHERN IRELAND TO SOLVE THIS PROBLEM BY AGREEMENT AND TO REACH A FRESH BASIS ON WHICH THE LIFE OF THE PROVINCE CAN BE CARRIED ON IN PEACE AND SECURITY, HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT REMAIN CONVINCED THAT THAT IS WHAT THE GREAT MAJORITY OF THE PEOPLE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WANT.

THE I.R.A. HAS DEMANDED AN AMNESTY. THAT IS NOT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL. IT DEMANDED THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL BRITISH TROOPS. THAT IS NOT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL. IT DEMANDED THE ABOLITION OF STORMONT. THAT IS NOT HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT'S PROPOSAL. IT CANNOT THEREFORE BE SAID THAT WE ARE ACCEDING TO THE DEMANDS OF THE I.R.A.

MR. MCNAMARA: IS THE PRIME MINISTER AWARE THAT MANY PEOPLE ON THIS SIDE OF THE HOUSE WILL APPRECIATE THE GREAT COURAGE AND VIGOUR WHICH HE HAS SHOWN IN THIS MATTER BECAUSE OF THE DIFFICULTIES, OF WHICH WE HAVE JUST SEEN AN EXAMPLE? WE ADMIRE HIM, IF ONLY A LITTLE BIT, FOR WHAT HE HAS DONE.

MAY I QUESTION HIM ON TWO POINTS? HE WILL BE AWARE THAT SPECIAL POWERS AND INTERNMENT HAVE BEEN A REAL BONE OF CONTENTION FOR THE MINORITY. CAN HE GIVE AN ASSURANCE THAT THE EVIDENCE AGAINST THE PEOPLE WHOM HE REGARDS AS HARD-CORE INTERNEES WILL BE PRODUCED SO THAT PEOPLE WILL IN SOME WAY OR OTHER BE ABLE TO JUDGE THE ATTITUDE OF THE GOVERNMENT AND SO THAT NO MAN WILL BE ARRESTED MERELY ON SUSPICION AND NO MAN WILL BE REGARDED PURELY AND SIMPLY AS BEING A HOSTAGE THERE FOR THE GOOD BEHAVIOUR OF PEOPLE WHO MIGHT BE RELEASED?

WITH REGARD TO THE SPECIAL POWERS CAN THE RIGHT HON GENTLEMAN ELABORATE FURTHER ON HOW THESE ARE TO WORK WHEN WE HAVE A SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND BECAUSE AGAIN WE WANT TO SEE HOW THESE WILL WORK INTO THE DOMESTIC LAW OF THE UNITED KINGDOM AND BE OBSERVED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM?

COMPLETE REVIEW

THE PRIME MINISTER: THE HON GENTLEMAN WILL SEE FROM THE BILL WHEN HE STUDIES THE DRAFT THAT ALL THE POWERS BELONGING AT THE MOMENT EITHER TO THE EXECUTIVE OR TO THE LEGISLATURE OF STORMONT WILL BE TRANSFERRED TO AND EXERCISED BY MY RIGHT HON FRIEND THE LORD PRESIDENT.

I HAVE ALSO STATED THAT HE WILL ENSURE THAT A COMPLETE REVIEW IS CARRIED OUT. OBVIOUSLY ON THE QUESTION OF SPECIAL POWERS, THIS IS PART OF THE LEGISLATION OF THE PARLIAMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND WHICH IS REQUIRED IN THIS PRESENT SITUATION. THAT ALSO IS A MATTER WHICH CAN NOW BE EXAMINED BY MY RIGHT HON FRIEND AND CONSIDERED BY HER MAJESTY'S GOVERNMENT.

REV. IAN PAISLEY: WOULD THE PRIME MINISTER NOT AGREE THAT THE SITUATION IN ULSTER AT PRESENT IS VERY TENSE INDEED AND AS A RESULT OF THE MOUNTING TENSION, THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND HAVE THE RIGHT TO DEMAND OF HIS GOVERNMENT NOW A STRONG DECLARATION ON TWO SPECIFIC POINTS.

NUMBER ONE IS THAT THERE WILL BE NO LET-UP IN THE CAMPAIGN AGAINST THE IRISH REPUBLICAN ARMY, THAT THIS IS A TIME FOR A STRONG MILITARY INITIATIVE AND THAT IN NO WAY WILL THE I.R.A. BE GIVEN IN TO BUT THAT THERE WILL BE A DEFINITE DRIVE NOW IRRESPECTIVE OF PROTESTS FROM DUBLIN OR ANYWHERE ELSE TO DEAL WITH THE MURDERERS IN OUR COMMUNITY?

SECONDLY, WILL HE GIVE A FIRM UNDERTAKING TO THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND NOW THAT THEIR DEMOCRATICALLY ELECTED PARLIAMENT IS PROROGUED THAT THEY WILL BE CONSULTED ABOUT ANYTHING THAT WOULD IN ANY WAY ATTEMPT TO CHANGE THEIR DESTINY AS PART AND PARCEL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM? WILL HE TELL US WHY THIS GOVERNMENT, HAVING ACCEPTED THAT THE CITIZENS OF NORTHERN IRELAND ARE PART AND PARCEL OF THE UNITED KINGDOM, WILL NOT COMPLETELY INTEGRATE NORTHERN IRELAND INTO THE UNITED KINGDOM? IS HE NOT AWARE THAT IF THERE ARE NOT STRONG ASSURANCES ON THESE TWO VITAL POINTS THEN THERE COULD BE A VERY SERIOUS SITUATION FROM WHICH NO ONE IN NORTHERN IRELAND WILL PROFIT?

LEGISLATIVE POWERS

WITH REGARD TO THE COMMISSION THAT HE PROPOSES TO SET UP WILL THE PRIME MINISTER GIVE AN ASSURANCE TO THE HOUSE THAT THIS COMMISSION HAS NO LEGISLATIVE POWERS, THAT THIS PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM HAS FULL LEGISLATIVE POWER AND THAT THERE WILL BE NO LEGISLATIVE POWER DELEGATED TO ANY COMMISSION THAT HE HAS IN MIND TO ASSEMBLE? AS THE PARLIAMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND IS NOW PROROGUED CAN HE GUARANTEE THAT THAT PARLIAMENT WILL HAVE A SAY IN THE FUTURE DESTINY OF NORTHERN IRELAND?

WILL HE SEE THAT AS SOON AS POSSIBLE THE PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND IRRESPECTIVE OF WHAT MIGHT BE SAID BY THE OPPOSITION HERE SHOULD HAVE THE RIGHT TO DECLARE WHERE THEY STAND ON THE UNION?

DOES HE NOT BELIEVE THIS WOULD HELP TO TAKE CONSIDERABLE TENSION OUT OF THE SITUATION? CAN HE ALSO ASSURE THE HOUSE THAT THERE WILL BE NO CONSULTATION WITH DUBLIN WITH REGARD TO THE FUTURE OF CITIZENS OF THIS KINGDOM?

ASSURANCE

X THE PRIME MINISTER: WHEN THE HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN HAS TIME TO STUDY MY STATEMENT HE WILL SEE THAT I GAVE A CATEGORIC ASSURANCE ABOUT THE SECURITY SITUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND RIGHT AT THE BEGINNING. ON THE QUESTION OF ANY CHANGE IN STATUS, NOT ONLY DID MY STATEMENT CONTAIN THE VERY CLEAR UNDERTAKINGS GIVEN BY ALL GOVERNMENTS IN THE PAST -- AND I MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE NINETEEN FORTYNINE ACT REMAINS OPERATIVE BECAUSE STORMONT IS ONLY PROROGUED -- BUT I REFERRED TO THE FUTURE REINFORCEMENT OF THIS POSITION WHICH WE BELIEVE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY MEANS OF THE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH WOULD BE STATUTORY ARRANGEMENTS, FOR THE PLEBISCITES.

AS FOR THE DUTIES OF MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE LORD PRESIDENT, AGAIN WHEN THE HONOURABLE GENTLEMAN STUDIES THE DRAFT BILL HE WILL SEE THAT A DUTY IS PLACED UPON MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND WHEREVER PRACTICABLE TO DISCUSS ANY PROPOSED LEGISLATION WITH THE ADVISORY COMMITTEE.

THAT COMMITTEE HAS NO POWERS WHATEVER TO LEGISLATE. HAVING CONSIDERED ITS ADVICE THE LEGISLATION MUST THEN BE DEALT WITH HERE BY THE WESTMINSTER PARLIAMENT.

ON THE QUESTION OF INTEGRATION, THIS IS A MATTER WHICH I KNOW HAS BEEN DISCUSSED BY VARIOUS HONOURABLE GENTLEMEN. WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THIS MOMENT IS THAT THE DEPARTMENTAL STRUCTURE IN BELFAST WILL REMAIN THE SAME. THIS IS MUCH THE BEST WAY OF DEALING WITH THE SITUATION SO THAT THE DEPARTMENT IN BELFAST WILL BE RESPONSIBLE TO MY RIGHT HONOURABLE FRIEND THE NEW SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND.

THE WHOLE OF THOSE ARRANGEMENTS WILL REMAIN UNCHANGED BUT THE RESPONSIBILITY WILL BE HANDLED THROUGH THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND IN THIS HOUSE.

THE FUTURE ALLOWS ALL THESE MATTERS TO BE DISCUSSED AND AN ATTEMPT TO BE MADE TO REACH AGREEMENT ON THEM BY THOSE CONCERNED IN THE PUBLIC LIFE OF NORTHERN IRELAND.

SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

MR. FITT: NEEDLESS TO SAY, THIS COULD BE A VERY EMOTIONAL OCCASION FOR ANY REPRESENTATIVE FROM NORTHERN IRELAND. VIEWED FROM THAT ASPECT, ONE CAN READILY UNDERSTAND THE FEELINGS OF ANXIETY WHICH MUST EXIST AMONG PEOPLE THROUGHOUT NORTHERN IRELAND. THE PROPOSALS PUT FORWARD BY THE PRIME MINISTER THIS MORNING CERTAINLY MERIT VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION BY ANY PERSON HOLDING ANY OFFICE OF RESPONSIBILITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

FOR MY PART, I WISH TO INDICATE TO THE PRIME MINISTER THAT THIS IS NOT THE TIME FOR INSTANT COMMENT IN VIEW OF THE DANGERS WHICH MAY ARISE IN NORTHERN IRELAND OVER THE WEEKEND, BUT I CAN PROMISE HIM THAT MY PARTY, IN ASSOCIATION WITH OTHER REPRESENTATIVES OF THE COMMUNITY, WILL GIVE VERY SERIOUS CONSIDERATION TO ALL THE PROPOSALS WHICH HAVE BEEN PUT FORWARD, NOT WITH A VIEW TO ANY PERSONAL OR POLITICAL GAIN, BUT IN THE INTERESTS OF THE WHOLE COMMUNITY IN NORTHERN IRELAND.

MR. DEEDES: ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF WHAT MY RIGHT HON FRIEND HAS PUT TO THE HOUSE, BUT BEARING IN MIND WHAT HE SAID ABOUT THE BORDER, LEST THERE BE ANY MISUNDERSTANDING ON EITHER SIDE OF THE IRISH CHANNEL, DOES HE AGREE THAT, HOWEVER MUCH WE MAY HOPE FOR THE BEST, WE MAY YET FACE A TASK OF THE GRIMMEST KIND AND PERHAPS A PROTRACTED ONE? IT IS NOT WELL TO SAY THAT WE MAY YET FIND OURSELVES NO LESS SEVERELY TESTED THAN HAS BEEN MR. FAULKNER AND HIS GOVERNMENT?

THE PRIME MINISTER: I THINK THAT GOVERNMENTS OF BOTH PARTIES EVER SINCE 1969 HAVE RECOGNISED THAT THAT TEST MIGHT COME AND THAT WE WOULD HAVE TO BE PREPARED FOR IT. BUT WHAT WE ARE NOW DOING AS A DELIBERATE ACT OF POLICY IS SETTING OUT TO LOWER THE TENSION AND TO REDUCE THE VIOLENCE AND COUNTER-VIOLENCE IN AN ATTEMPT TO ACHIEVE A LASTING SETTLEMENT.

COMBINED POLICE FORCE

MR. BOTTOMLEY: HAS THE PRIME MINISTER GIVEN CONSIDERATION TO THE PROPOSITION THAT, AS A WAY OF CONTROLLING THE VIOLENCE, THERE SHOULD BE A COMBINED POLICE FORCE DRAWN FROM THE IRISH REPUBLIC AND FROM THE ROYAL ULSTER CONSTABULARY FOR PATROLLING THE BORDER?

THE PRIME MINISTER: NO, WE HAVE NOT CONSIDERED THAT. THE R.U.C. WILL REMAIN AS A POLICE BODY, IN EXACTLY THE SAME WAY AS WE HAVE OTHER POLICE BODIES IN DIFFERENT PARTS OF BRITAIN. IT IS NOT CORRECT TO SAY, AS I SAW REPORTED IN ONE ACCOUNT TODAY, THAT THIS BODY WILL JUST BECOME MERGED WITH OTHER POLICE FORCES.

IT IS NATURAL THAT THE POLICE AUTHORITY WHICH HAS BEEN ESTABLISHED SHOULD REMAIN, BUT, INsofar AS A MINISTER IN NORTHERN IRELAND HAS HAD RESPONSIBILITY FOR IT, THAT RESPONSIBILITY WILL NOW REST WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE.

ENDS VERBATIM SERVICE 105/72

L..P..S...

CENTROFORM LN

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SNT AT 25/0943Z RJ

RCVD AT 25/0943Z BM