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Government Statement on White Paper 5/4/1982

The Government have just received the British Government's White Paper on devolved government for Northern Ireland and will study it in detail.

It is at once apparent, however, that the proposals contained in the White Paper conform very closely to the descriptions given by Mr. Prior, the Northern Ireland Secretary, in the course of his consultations with the Minister for Foreign Affairs last week in London.

This being so, the Government can only confirm their view as to the unworkable nature and the mistaken focus of the proposals. Their unworkability is emphasised by the reaction of the Northern Ireland political parties. The Government consider the whole focus of the White Paper - which serves the aim of elaborating a form of devolved administration in and for Northern Ireland alone - to be mistaken because, in their view, it ignores the broader dimensions of the problem. It is the Government's view that only policies designed to promote peace, stability and reconciliation between the two major Irish traditions, and to develop the totality of relations within these islands, can contribute to a true solution of Northern Ireland's difficulties. Such policies should be brought forward through the operation of the Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council and, in particular, through the role of an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary institution in which Northern Ireland representatives participate.

The fundamental objective of Government policy remains the achievement of a united Ireland by peaceful political means.