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PRESS INFORMATION

From the Office of
Rt. Hon Neil Kinnock MP
Leader of the Opposition

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August 22nd 1984

The following statement by Peter Archer MP and Clive Soley MP was issued through the office of the Leader of the Opposition this afternoon.

Events in Northern Ireland over the last eleven days have demonstrated the desperate need for clear and decisive leadership from the British Government. At present there has been an abandonment of responsibility by the Prime Minister in failing to appoint a Secretary of State and thus bring an end to the present interregnum.

British policy is floundering around in a power vacuum which will inevitably lead to more deaths and injuries. The Government should as a matter of urgency:

1. Establish an independent inquiry into the events surrounding the ban on Martin Galvin and the subsequent death of Sean Downes. The Opposition would be prepared to co-operate in suggesting names for that inquiry.
2. Respond to the growing alienation from the criminal justice system of unionists and republicans alike by introducing the legal safeguard of corroboration in non-jury supergrass trials, and withdrawing the use of plastic bullets.
3. Carry out an urgent review of the security situation so that every opportunity to re-introduce the basic civil and legal rights expected in any Western democratic society can be explored.

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4. Seek urgent high level talks with the Irish Government to give a joint British/Irish lead. These talks should be based on the Irish Forum Report and no group of people would have the right of veto over policies jointly agreed by the government of the UK and the government of Ireland.

The Labour Party believes that clear and determined leadership by the British and Irish Governments can resolve the continuing agony of Northern Ireland, and that, having imposed partition on Ireland without the consent of the Irish people, we have a duty to give that lead. We also believe that such a lead could prove very persuasive to the people of Northern Ireland, and result in a united, peaceful and prosperous Ireland, where the civil, religious rights and the cultural heritage of both unionists and republicans can flourish.

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