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*PSS  
A/S O Tuathail  
Counsellors A.I  
A.I Secretariat  
Mr Waller.*

30 July 1987

Dear Eamonn

In regard to our conversation last Monday about the possible implications for Northern Ireland of the proposed poll-tax and the related proposals designed to revitalize inner cities here, I should like to confirm that it is not the intention of the British Government to apply either measure to Northern Ireland.

I have been told this by David Trippier the Minister responsible for the inner city proposals at the Department of the Environment and indeed, I think it is made clear both in the "Queen's Speech" and in the attached extracts from the background notes to the "Queen's Speech". Moreover according to a contact in the Department of the Environment there is no intention now of devising such measures for Northern Ireland in the future.

Of course the poll-tax has run into considerable opposition here. The latest opinion poll shows that 54 per cent of the electorate oppose the tax compared with 28 per cent in favour. Opponents of the tax have pointed out that many prosperous single people will gain while some less well-off households, particularly in London with more than one adult working, could lose out substantially. The Government has strongly defended the tax by pointing out that it is a fair system and that those who suffer from the injustices of the present system, single parents and pensioners stand to gain most. However, neither the general public nor the majority of Conservative MPs seem particularly impressed by this. Indeed it is commonly felt that but for the enthusiasm of the Prime Minister herself, the proposal would, by now, have been dropped.

As far as the revitalisation of the inner cities is concerned it may have been felt that the special position of Belfast has been recognised already through a number of measures funded both by the British Government and by the European Community. (I have in mind particularly John Hume's success in getting Community and Government funding for housing renewal there). These involved considerable sums of public money and as you know the hope is that the new proposals will be financed largely through private capital.

These are undoubtedly issues which will continue to receive much media and parliamentary attention of which I will keep you informed in the future.

Yours sincerely

Andrew O'Rourke  
Ambassador

Mr Eamonn Ó Tuathail  
Assistant Secretary  
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