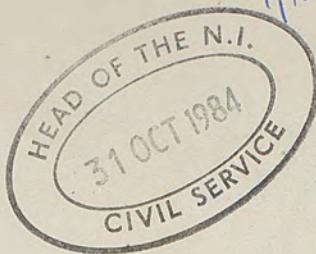


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cc PS/PUS (LAB)  
~~PS/SIR E Bell~~  
 Mr Merfield  
 Mr Burns  
 Mr Abbott  
 Mr Hill  
 Mr Clark, FCO  
 Mr Lyon

2 Mr Connell

"MAP  
21 NOV 1984  
3 P.M. - Forum

## DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS

I did not, for some reason, receive until today my copy of the draft reply to Mr Flesher attached to Mr Hill's minute of 29 October.

As I have already mentioned, I would be unhappy about offering the Prime Minister a text in the terms suggested. We should not allow ourselves to be led astray by the way in which - in my view mistakenly - Mr Flesher has expressed his request for material. There may be a need to provide defensive briefing for the debate on HMG's attitude to the Forum report. But there is no reason to make Forum the focus of anything that the Prime Minister may say about Northern Ireland in her opening speech in the debate; on the contrary, nothing could be more calculated to get her off on the wrong foot with the Unionists and, probably, some of her own supporters.

I attach a draft letter to Mr Flesher explaining this, and a suggested alternative text.



(A.J.E. BRENNAN)

31 October 1984

CONFIDENTIAL



4

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

FILE NUMBER

DRAFT LETTER

DRESEE'S REFERENCE

To	Enclosures	Copies to be sent to
T Flesher Esq 10 Downing Street  (Full Postal Address)		
(Full Address, if Necessary)		

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY

PS/S of S

(Name of Signatory)

Your letter of 25 October about the Prime Minister's opening speech in the debate on the Address asked us for "draft speaking notes on progress in formulating the Government's response to the report of the new Ireland Forum". We do not think that it would be right for anything that the Prime Minister might say about Northern Ireland in her opening speech to take the Forum as its focus. The Forum is not mentioned in the Queen's Speech, and such an emphasis would not, we believe, be welcome either to Unionists or to many of the Government's own supporters. I attach a draft of what we think the Prime Minister might say about Northern Ireland in the round.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

E.R.

NORTHERN IRELAND: SPEAKING NOTE FOR  
THE DEBATE ON THE ADDRESS

I turn to Northern Ireland.

We stand resolutely behind all those people of Northern Ireland, from whichever community they come, who will have no truck with violence and who seek, by peaceful and constitutional means, a lasting solution to the Province's problems. We shall foster their efforts, and, by our security policies, strive to create conditions in which they can pursue their aims without fear. In particular, we must deal with abuse and perversion of the democratic process; as the Gracious Speech made clear, we shall introduce legislation to prevent personation at elections in Northern Ireland.

We have repeatedly made clear that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will not be changed without the consent of the majority of the people there. We were glad to see this acknowledged in the report of the New Ireland Forum, and I repeat it now. But this does not free us from the obligation to respect, in the political and other institutions of the Province, the culture and traditions of the minority community there.

My rt hon Friend, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland is exploring with the Northern Ireland parties how powers might be returned to a local administration on a basis which would be acceptable to both parts of the community.

E.R.

We shall maintain the friendly links with the Republic of Ireland which are so desirable between close neighbours.

[I am looking forward to a constructive meeting, in a little while, with Dr Fitzgerald.] Such a relationship can only help the process of reconciliation in the North. It poses no threat to the Northern majority, and those who would have it otherwise are profoundly mistaken. Although we have welcomed much in the Forum report, my rt hon Friend the Member for Waveney made it plain in the debate last July that none of the three specific proposals in the report for the government of Northern Ireland would be acceptable.