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FROM: G HARRISON
CPL DIVISION
25 OCTOBER 1994

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- cc: PS/Sir John Wheeler (L,B&DFP) -B
- PS/Michael Ancram (L,B&DENI) -B
- PS/Mr Moss (L,DHSS&DOE) -B
- PS/PUS (L&B) -B
- PS/Mr Fell -B
- Mr Legge -B
- Mr Thomas -B
- Mr Steele -B
- Mr Watkins -B
- Mr Williams -B
- Mr Wood (L&B) -B
- Mrs Brown *25/26/10* -B
- Mrs Collins -B
- Mr Dodds -B
- Mr Maccabe -B
- Mr Marsh -B
- Mr Maxwell -B
- Mr Perry -B
- Mr Stephens -B
- Mr B R D White -B
- Mr Beeton -B
- Mr Brearley -B
- Mr Caine -B

1. Mr Brooker (signed DB 25/10)
2. PS/Secretary of State (L&B) -B

HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE ON NORTHERN IRELAND: THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 1994

I attach a revised draft opening speech for use by the Secretary of State during the adjournment debate on Northern Ireland on Thursday 27 October 1994.

2. This takes account of the Prime Minister's speech on Friday 21 October and his meeting with Mr Reynolds on Monday 24 October, as well as incorporating an announcement of a special fund to promote additional help for people disabled by violence in Northern Ireland.

signed Gillian Harrison

G HARRISON (MISS)
Constitutional and Political Division
OAB Ext 6483

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HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE: THURSDAY 27 OCTOBER 1994**DRAFT OPENING SPEECH**Introduction

The Government is glad to be able to make time for this debate on Northern Ireland. Much has happened in the Province in recent weeks. Events of great significance have taken place which provide a chance for a fresh start for the people of Northern Ireland.

The Ceasefires

2. The Government has welcomed the ceasefires called by both the IRA and the anti-nationalist paramilitaries. For the first time in 25 years the people of Northern Ireland are able to experience daily life without fear of violence or threat of violence. These are two very important steps towards a lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

3. The people of Northern Ireland have suffered greatly throughout these years. We must not forget that more than 3,000 have died and more than 20,000 wounded. The people have shown great courage and endurance. Most importantly, they have not given in to the men with the bombs and the armalite. It is democracy that has won. It has been shown that violence is senseless and leads nowhere, except to bitterness, hatred and division.

Government Policies

4. These events were not conjured out of the air. Neither were they achieved by secret deals or promises. The present situation is the culmination of the stoicism of the Northern Ireland people and of the Governments policies over many years, policies which have involved much hard work and perseverance. Despite many storms and buffeting on the way, we have maintained a steady course.

5. Our policy is founded on the principle that Northern Ireland's status as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of the majority of the people who live there.

6. The Government's policy objectives have been and continue to be to bring peace, stability, reconciliation and prosperity for the people of Northern Ireland. We seek to achieve this goal by pursuing a series of interconnected and mutually re-enforcing policies in the areas of security, political development, strengthening the economy and eliminating discrimination.

7. Our security policy aims to maintain the rule of law; to ensure that all the people of Northern Ireland are free to express their political opinions without fear of discrimination or reprisal; to defend the democratically expressed wishes of the people of Northern Ireland against those who use violence to promote political objectives, including a change in the status of Northern Ireland, and to create the conditions for a just, peaceful and prosperous society.

8. The rule of law has been bravely upheld by officers of the RUC, supported as necessary by the armed forces. We shall continue to seek to bring offenders to justice, within the rule of law. As the Prime Minister has said, "we have not lowered our guard".

9. Northern Ireland's economy has suffered from terrorism for the past 25 years. Unemployment has reduced noticeably in recent months but is still too high. The Government has sought to tackle social and economic problems by promoting economic development and by outlawing discrimination with the Fair Employment Act. Programmes such as Targeting Social Need and Making Belfast Work seek to tackle social and economic disadvantage by focussing resources more precisely on the most disadvantaged areas and people, in whatever part of the community they arise.

10. The Government already sets public spending in Northern Ireland at a level above the UK average. The Prime Minister has given an undertaking that the Government will take full account of Northern Ireland's special needs in setting future levels of public spending for the Province.

11. In the case of political development, our long-standing policy aim has been to achieve a widely acceptable and durable political accommodation. We want to see more power restored to locally accountable representatives as well as the development of co-operative relations with the Irish Republic for the mutual benefit of the people of Northern Ireland and the Republic. It is

to this end that for the last 3 years we have engaged in discussions with the Northern Ireland constitutional parties and the Irish Government.

12. One of the features our policy particularly over the last two or three years has been the development of a close working relationship with the Irish Government. This includes co-operation in security matters which has benefited the people of Northern Ireland and also the Republic. It has also included co-operation in the political sphere. The Prime Minister has described this as unprecedented.

13. This co-operation is reflected in the Joint Declaration made last December in which the Taoiseach, on behalf of the Irish Government, recognised that it would be wrong to impose a united Ireland, in the absence of the freely given consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. He also accepted that the democratic right of self-determination by the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement and consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

14. I have engaged in fruitful discussions with Mr Spring, the Irish Foreign Minister at our regular meetings of the Inter-Governmental Conference. The Prime Minister has also held regular meetings with his opposite number, Mr Reynolds. Most recently on Monday.

15. As Members of the House will be aware, for the last year, we have been preparing with the Irish Government, a Framework Document. This is not a blueprint but will represent our joint understanding of the elements of a settlement, which, in the judgement of the two Governments is most likely to secure widespread acceptance.

16. Steady progress is being made but there are still important issues to be resolved. Last Friday the Prime Minister gave a commitment to publish this document when it is completed, so that everyone in Northern Ireland can see what it says. It will concentrate on relations between the two Governments, and between Northern Ireland and the Republic.

17. The Prime Minister also undertook to publish, at the same time, our own proposals on a possible way forward within Northern Ireland. This is a matter for discussion between the British Government and the Northern Ireland parties. It is hoped that both these documents will facilitate the resumption of multilateral talks with the aim of achieving an overall settlement which will be put to the electorate of Northern Ireland in a referendum.

18. As I have said, there has been much hard work in developing and implementing all the policies which have helped to bring us to the point. I pay tribute to my Rt Hon Friend the Member for the City of London and Westminster South, who with great patience worked to initiate the Talks process three years ago. I should also like

to remind this House once again of the great achievement of the Prime Minister who placed Northern Ireland at the head of this Government's priorities and has kept it there. The Joint Declaration made by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach set out the principles which must apply when seeking any settlement - the principles of democracy and consent. The Declaration demonstrated that violence would not achieve a solution but lead only into a cul-de-sac. There would not be an IRA ceasefire or an anti-Nationalist paramilitary ceasefire without the Declaration.

19. The Downing Street declaration made it clear that the route to involvement in political discussions on the future of Northern Ireland lay in a permanent renunciation of violence as a means of achieving political objectives. The IRA ceasefire announcement was not entirely clear on this point. As this Government is responsible for the security of the people of Northern Ireland we have rightly behaved with caution.

20. Last Friday, in Northern Ireland, the Prime Minister announced that, after reviewing the actions of Sinn Fein and the IRA, he was prepared to make a working assumption that the ceasefire is intended to be permanent. He went on to say that "If we can continue reasonably to assume that Sinn Fein is establishing a commitment to exclusively peaceful methods; if the IRA continues to show that it has ended its terrorism; then we shall be ready to convene exploratory talks before this year is out".

21. The purpose of this dialogue will be to explore how Sinn Fein can make the transition to normal political life and to play the same part as the existing constitutional parties. It will explore how Sinn Fein could enter the political talks process. There will also be discussion of the practical consequences of ending violence; particularly how illegal weapons and explosives are to be removed from life in Northern Ireland. As these weapons are both North and South of the border we intend to consult the Irish Government on a co-ordinated approach to this difficult issue.

22. The Prime Minister also referred to the Loyalist ceasefire and made it clear that democratic politics are open to all who renounce violence. He gave an undertaking that once they have sufficiently demonstrated their commitment to exclusively peaceful methods, they can take part in public life and, at the appropriate time, the Government will enter into contact with them. We will also be looking for ways of taking their views into account in the Talks process.

23. Hon Members may be assured that we will not take risks with the security of the people of Northern Ireland. But we have been able to respond to the diminished threat. Last Friday I rescinded all the remaining closure orders on border crossings. On the same day the Home Secretary lifted the Orders which excluded Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness from Great Britain; other exclusion orders remain under review. The need for soldiers to patrol the

streets in Northern Ireland will continue to be reviewed. But, as the Prime Minister said, "... it is our firm objective to return to exclusively civilian policing".

24. While all these events have brought hope we must assuredly not forget the victims and their families who have suffered so much during the last 25 years of violence. The staff who work in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland have responded to their needs as caring and dedicated professionals and I pay tribute to their excellent work. But victims and their families often will have long term physical and psychological scars and disabilities which need continuing care, compassion and support. The Government wants to do more to help staff in this most important work and Malcolm Moss will therefore be setting up a special fund to provide additional help for people disabled by violence in Northern Ireland. £1 million will be made available and I would see this being used to help people with physical disabilities in the Regional Disablement Centre, Musgrave Park Hospital. It will also help people with psychiatric problems, and those needing bereavement counselling and support.

The Future

25. The people of Northern Ireland can now look forward to the future when all our policies are able to come to fruition. I firmly believe that there is now a chance for a peaceful future of Northern

Ireland. A future where all sections of the community accept the democratic process as the only means of achieving political objectives, including any constitutional change. A future where each individual will feel able to express their political views without fear of reprisal and where all are afforded equality of treatment and parity of esteem. A future where all policing can be carried out without the support of the army.

26. I also look forward to a prosperous future. The Northern Ireland economy is well poised to take advantage of the tremendous new opportunities which the cessation of violence offers - the Peace Dividend as some have termed it. Recent economic performance has been good. The Northern Ireland Economic Council said on Monday that "The combination of Northern Ireland going into a seemingly sustained period of economic recovery together with the benefits that would arise with an end to all violence and the creation of political stability, provides an economic scenario in Northern Ireland that has never been better in the past 25 years".

27. I expect to see significant growth and development flowing from increased investment, higher levels of trade including trade with the Republic of Ireland and in particular tourism which I expect to show the greatest and most immediate benefit of peace. The Government will play its part. The Prime Minister has announced that the Government will be convening an investment conference in Belfast in December.

28. I very much welcome the support which the international community is demonstrating for the peace process. Both the European Union and the Government of New Zealand are increasing their contributions to the International Fund for Ireland, and the Australian Government has announced its intention to contribute to it. The Government of the United States and the European Union are also putting together packages of economic assistance to Northern Ireland to help embed the peace and promote community reconciliation through economic regeneration. The Prime Minister has announced that we shall be seeking the views of the people of Northern Ireland, right across the spectrum, on the projects we and the European Union should back financially.

On the political front I look forward, with rational hope, to the achievement of a political settlement which is widely acceptable to the people of Northern Ireland. As I have already mentioned, we are working with the Irish Government to bring the Joint Framework document to completion as soon as we can. But there is nothing to fear. Joint authority is on neither Government's agenda and the document will be published for all to see. No settlement will be imposed. Any settlement emerging from the Talks process will be put to the electorate of Northern Ireland in a referendum. The future of Northern Ireland is clearly in the hands of the people who live there.