

AS153195 P. 2



Ulster Bank

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To 01/06/96

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From the Chairman, Sir George Oulgley CB

Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP
Secretary of State for N Ireland
Stormont Castle
Belfast 4

421 EMB 6
13/8

W. G. G. G.
I have given

Linda an input

5 August 1996

Dear Secretary of State,

I have been asked to send you a copy of a statement issued today by the 7 bodies listed at the end. You will see that they are a very representative and substantial group of 'economic' interests. One of the bodies issuing the Statement is the N I Economic Council which I chair.

The group would welcome the opportunity of a discussion with you and perhaps in due course a meeting with the Prime Minister.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely

George

SIR GEORGE OULGLEY

- cc: Ps/s of S (B&L)
- Ps/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)
- Ps/Michael Ancram (B&L)
- Ps/PUS (B&L)
- Ps/Sir David Fell
- Mr Legge
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Steele
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mrs Brown - PL refer to PML/71/96 for Ps/PM reply

Mr Maccabe

Mr Loughran

I would be grateful for input for a draft reply by Thursday 15/8.

L. Devlin 12/8



WARNING BY MAJOR ORGANISATIONS
ON
CURRENT COMMUNITY ISSUES

Senior personnel of major organisations representative of business, trade unions and other economic interests and listed at the end of this Press Release have held a series of meetings to review the economic situation and prospects in light of the community difficulties of recent weeks. They have today issued the attached statement.

FULL STATEMENT

It would be impossible to exaggerate the importance of a successful outcome to the efforts being made to reduce tension and avoid conflict in coming weeks. We warmly commend those efforts. A repetition of the community dissension and disorder of July would compound the severe damage already done to the Northern Ireland economy and its prospects.

At a time when uncertainty surrounds our No 1 industry and the many businesses which depend on it as a result of the UK's BSE difficulties, the last thing we need is a self-inflicted wound.

The world thought that we had turned a corner. It has been shocked - indeed we have surprised ourselves - by the public display of animosity and bitterness.

Any society which ignores economic realities and plays fast and loose with its economy inevitably faces a day of reckoning. Although sadly prevented from achieving anything approaching its full potential, the Northern Ireland economy came through the Troubles surprisingly well. It did so thanks to Government support, an excellent workforce and the resilience of business.

All over the world, people are reaching out to grasp eagerly every opportunity for growth. For Northern Ireland the moment of truth has arrived, when it must decide whether it wants to be regarded as a credible, serious, first division economic player or is prepared to accept relegation.

Business at all levels has a responsibility - which it readily accepts - to put every ounce of energy into the race for growth in a very competitive world. But it is severely handicapped if it has to operate in an environment which destroys confidence. It is essential that those both inside and outside Northern Ireland who have to make investment decisions based on an assessment of risk should possess that confidence. Community stability is a crucial factor in the assessment. A society which does not eschew violence and turmoil - whatever the perceived justification - is on the road to nowhere.

Surely the entire population of Northern Ireland can accept that, whatever else divides it, it has a common interest in rapid economic growth and jobs. Failure to focus on that common interest jeopardises the jobs of those in work and the job prospects of those (particularly young people and the long-term unemployed) who are without work.

The vision for the future can be nothing less than a fair and just society enjoying a steadily rising standard of living which is shared by all.

The prize is therefore enormous. The remarkable progress made in recent years and boosted by the ceasefires in the Autumn of 1994 was beginning to show what can be achieved. But a great deal remains to be done if our vision of a fair and just society is to be realised on the economic as well as on other fronts. We need to grow at a much faster rate than the rest of Europe is likely to achieve.

Growth comes from patiently cultivating existing markets and gaining entry to new ones. In the case of Tourism, it means selling Northern Ireland itself as a place where people will want to spend their leisure or attend their Business Conference. We can do it, but the economic breakthrough will require a massive and sustained effort. Business will continue to do its best, whatever the circumstances. But if Northern Ireland desires the kind of economic miracle which other regions have achieved, the whole community must now put its shoulder to the wheel.

We have hesitated before speaking so bluntly. We have, however, a duty to tell it as it is, before it is too late. There is already a lot of lost ground to recover. It can be done, but we simply cannot afford to slip back any further.

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ABOVE STATEMENT ISSUED BY:

**Confederation of British Industry
Hospitality Association for Northern Ireland
Institute of Directors
Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions
Northern Ireland Economic Council
Northern Ireland Growth Challenge**

5 August 1996

END

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