

28 June 1983

**Mr Speaker:** I gather that the Broadcasting Committee meeting will be short in view of the circumstances.

## GOVERNMENT'S NORTHERN IRELAND POLICY

### Statement by Secretary of State

**Mr Speaker:** I now call on the Secretary of State, the Rt Hon James Prior MP, to make a statement on Her Majesty's Government's policy in Northern Ireland.

**The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Mr Prior):** Mr Speaker and Members, I am very glad to accept your invitation to address the Assembly on Her Majesty's Government's policy towards Northern Ireland. Of course I have a deep interest in the development of the Assembly and take a keen interest in its growth. But this is not the Assembly of the United Kingdom Government nor is it the Assembly, as the Press sometimes irreverently say, of Jim Prior, nor is it, for that matter, solely your Assembly. It is the Assembly of all those elected by the people of Northern Ireland, some of whom are not here today. But all who believe in constitutional politics have a role to play in seeking a way forward for the whole community.

It should not pass without notice that this meeting of the Assembly gives you, and through you the people of the province, an opportunity to hear an account of the Government's policy directly from the Secretary of State, something which has not been available to my predecessors. This is my first chance to speak to you since the general election. It is an opportune time to take stock of the political outlook for the province.

The election results here in Northern Ireland have already had much attention in the media. Without commenting at length I would like to draw out two features. Firstly, there is the fact that the majority of the people in the province gave their support to a constitutional approach to our problems. They unequivocally rejected the argument that violence is an acceptable means of settling political differences. We all have a duty to respond to this view, expressed as it was from sections of our community. The challenge to us all is to reach agreement upon constitutional forms which will satisfy the hopes, and remove the fears, of all the people in the province. The second feature which emerged from the election was the increased size of the vote for Sinn Fein - a party which has made clear to all its support for violence. My rejection of that path is absolute.

**Hon Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Prior:** During the course of this speech I wish to talk about economic and social issues, and security. But I would like to comment first on the political framework.

The Government's view was firmly stated in the manifesto:

"The people of Northern Ireland will continue to be offered a framework for participation in local democracy and political progress through the Assembly. There will be no change in Northern Ireland's constitutional position in the United Kingdom without the consent of the majority of people there and no devolution of power without widespread support throughout the community".

This policy was firmly endorsed in the Queen's Speech at the opening of the new Session of Parliament.

28 June 1983

The machinery for giving effect to that policy was spelt out in detail in the 1982 Northern Ireland Act. Parliament approved the provisions of that Act, including the conditions on which further constitutional progress can be made. I must say to you today that I see no possibility of this new Parliament setting less exacting conditions than those which were approved just over a year ago.

I would like to spell out again the basis of our approach to the problems of this province.

Our first premise has been that Northern Ireland needs a system of devolved Government which encourages local, democratic participation. This does not in any way imply a lack of support from Her Majesty's Government for the Union. Unless it is the wish of a majority, there can be no change in the constitutional position of Northern Ireland and this has been recognised in Dublin, as well as in Westminster. I think though that it is generally acknowledged that there are, nonetheless, special Northern Ireland characteristics which can best be reflected by an administration here.

Secondly, the Government's approach must take account of the 2 distinctive identities within Northern Ireland. All of us must face the divisions in the community which are at the heart of the political problem here. To recognise and take account of these divisions implies no threat to the rights and interests of either side. Working together and reaching an accommodation on how responsibility should be exercised, does not imply a step towards a united Ireland without the consent of a majority. Working together can only enhance the stability of the province.

So, we should not overlook, indeed we cannot overlook, the fact that there are differences. But we must seek to accommodate them and the reality is that any proposals which come forward for the administration of Northern Ireland must have substantial support from both sides of the community. This is not a technical requirement; it is an essential pre-condition for devolved Government to operate effectively here. If the bulk of the majority community or the bulk of the minority is strongly hostile to particular proposals for devolution, they have no future.

This in turn implies that the Government will support a move to a devolved system of administration provided that the provisions of the 1982 Act, endorsed in our manifesto, are met. We must therefore, look for proposals that will be recognised as practical and will secure the support of both Houses of Parliament on the grounds that they command widespread acceptance throughout the community.

The third strand in our approach is that relations between the communities here both influence and are affected by the state of relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. Those relations are important and will continue to improve in a spirit of close and practical co-operation. The most recent manifestation of this was the meeting at Stuttgart between the Prime Minister and Dr FitzGerald. Let me say clearly that good bi-lateral relations, coupled with an open and positive attempt to recognise the vital importance of understanding at all levels, are not inconsistent with the constitutional guarantee. But I do hope that they provide an encouraging atmosphere in which we may expect improved relations within and between the communities in Northern Ireland.

We have given, and will continue to give, a clear commitment to the right of both traditions to pursue their aspirations; to make progress in the field of Anglo-Irish relations and above all to support the Assembly as the best vehicle for political co-

28 June 1983

operation and for necessary dialogue and compromise. This is the substance of the Government's commitment to political development.

Since the beginning of the year the Assembly, in its plenary sessions, and through the less public work of its Departmental committees, and through its other committees has been having an increasing impact on Government decision making. The Assembly has produced over 20 reports in the past 3 or 4 months, and I understand that Members are actively completing another 10. I pay tribute now to those who have contributed to this work. In about half the cases the Assembly were responding to a request by Government for comment on proposed legislation or other new policy. The other reports relate to matters raised by the committees themselves. This is a good balance. It has led the Government to reconsider proposals for legislation on a number of occasions, and is influencing the thinking of Departments. I might add that in a number of cases the Assembly have pointed to the difficulty of considering proposals for Draft Orders within the time allowed for consultation. We recognise this, and in future we will aim to give the Assembly a longer period for consultation on such proposals.

Ministerial colleagues have attended both plenary and committee sessions. These demonstrate the real opportunity which the Assembly has provided to widen public debate, on an informed and structured basis on vital social and economic issues and problems. The presence of a locally elected body increases the extent to which Government decision makers are publicly accountable for their decisions; and I repeat my willingness to see that my Colleagues in Government, Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office, visit the Assembly to discuss and answer questions about major issues within their Departmental responsibilities.

I hope that the opportunities for the Assembly to contribute to policy formation will continue to grow and will have an increasing effect. Departmental Ministers remain ready to speak regularly in the Assembly, either to lead a discussion, to answer a debate or make a statement on a topic, followed by an opportunity for questions on that statement.

I turn now to security. Progress on the political and economic front will be affected by our success in dealing with the threat of terrorism and the racketeering it brings in its wake. This Government, like its predecessors, is implacably resolved to bring terrorism to an end by the impartial and effective enforcement of the law. The rule of law lies at the heart of our democratic processes, which in their turn are intended to promote the welfare of the whole community. Whatever the alleged motive, violence to overthrow these processes cannot be seen as anything other than simply criminal. This applies to terrorists of any persuasion - all must be defeated and their evil ways rejected absolutely.

The threat to the rule of law and our democratic traditions is not a simple one. The terrorists are trying to undermine our democratic values by provoking the community into taking vindictive counter measures. Not only would this be counter productive, in that such retaliation would generate support for the terrorists, but in the long run it would destroy our values just as surely as the acts of the terrorists themselves. I abhor, we all abhor, terrorism in any form. I am especially concerned that it is the strategy of many terrorists to destabilise our society. It is their intention to establish a Marxist-style state which is completely against the traditions of the United Kingdom. I believe too, that the establishment of such a state would be equally abhorrent to the parties in the Republic, and to all those who value democracy in Europe, in America and throughout the world. For these reasons the Government

28 June 1983

will continue to use every means and every power within the law to bring terrorist criminals to justice. To this end the Government is committed to giving the Chief Constable and the GOC all the resources they require. The security forces need and deserve the active support of the public and especially of public representatives, in their task. In particular, the public must demonstrate this support through the provision of information that may lead to crimes being prevented or criminals arrested.

I am also anxious to see a wider recognition of the impressive achievements of the security forces. The Chief Constable's Annual Report for 1982 sets out the facts of a continued steady abatement in the level of violence in the province. There have been tragedies and frustrations, but there have been significant successes as well in which security forces in the Republic have played their part. Dedicated police work did prevent many acts of violence planned during the recent election campaign, just as it has frustrated attempted armed robberies and other violent crime which is becoming an ugly extension of activity by terrorist gangs. It was the same skill and dedication which has enabled charges to be brought so quickly following some recent brutal killings. These may not hit the headlines in the same way as terrorist incidents do, but they are real successes and they are of fundamental importance. However, I will not be satisfied - I know none of us will be satisfied - until terrorist violence from all sides is stamped out.

I want to say a word, if I may, about prisons. Within the prisons, and particularly within the Maze, a number of Loyalist prisoners continue to refuse to conform fully with the prison regulations with the objective of forcing the Government to re-introduce a system of segregation of prisoners by paramilitary affiliation. Support has been given to this fundamental change of prisons policy but the people have sought to disguise the nature of the change by referring to "administrative separation" and "local discretion" exercised by the Governor. I have given this issue very serious consideration indeed, as have my colleagues, and I must tell you frankly that a segregated system would increase the ability of paramilitary organisations to exercise control within the prisons with a consequentially higher risk to the safety of prisoners and prison staff alike.

The security of the prisons is of the first importance. Prison Governors and their officers are fully aware of this, and every effort will continue to be made to ensure that Northern Ireland prisoners remain secure and under the proper control of the prison authorities. The Northern Ireland prison system is widely recognised as humane and fair in its treatment of prisoners, and I am determined that it should maintain that reputation.

Mr Speaker, I welcome the opportunity, also, of stressing my determination to play a full part in tackling Northern Ireland's economic problems. Despite some reports to the contrary, I am not ashamed to say that I intend to ensure that the province receives a share of public expenditure which recognises its special needs and circumstances.

**Hon Members:** Hear, hear.

**Mr Prior:** I thought that might get some response somewhere, even if some people suggested I should depart to the Falkland Islands as Governor there.

Of particular importance in this regard is bound to be the correct choice of public expenditure priorities, and wise and efficient employment of resources. The

28 June 1983

Government's order for public expenditure priorities here is first of all, law and order, then industrial development and support and housing. I very much appreciate the energy with which the whole Assembly, and its Finance and Personnel Committee in particular, have set about the task of considering the allocation of resources. In this highly important field I look forward to receiving your advice and assistance in tackling the key decisions about the ordering of public expenditure priorities for the future.

I should say at this stage how pleased I am at the recent announcement that the European Community have now confirmed their willingness to provide some £60 million for urban infrastructure projects in Belfast. I am very glad that our efforts have been rewarded in this way, and in saying "our" efforts I am not only talking about the very considerable work which has been done by the Government and particularly by officials, but also the invaluable work of the European Commission and the constant support of the Northern Ireland MEPs. In response to those who are anxious that Belfast should genuinely benefit from the Regulation I can confirm that money paid to the United Kingdom under the Regulation will indeed mean a genuine increase in expenditure here and I might say that has taken some getting as well.

In the industrial sphere the Government will continue their efforts to strengthen the economy, improve industrial competitiveness and expand the industrial base. In Northern Ireland the level of unemployment is appallingly high and affects all sectors of the community. The Government will continue to deploy a very wide range of measures to provide training and short-term employment and will also seek to stimulate the creation of new jobs. But vital though it remains to attract new industry and new inward investment, it is the creation of jobs within the indigenous economy of the province that we have to pursue and support with increasing vigour. I believe that is a very vital point.

The Industrial Development Board are now developing a new spirit of partnership with existing local industry. LEDU have had their most successful year ever, promoting more than 2,500 jobs last year and over the next couple of years the IDB themselves plan to gear up to reach a promotion target of 10,000 jobs a year. The problem of Northern Ireland's bad image with investors has been defined with a new clarity, and the plan to counter it with the most vigorous and professional means is already under way. I believe that the package of measures I announced in March should have done much to restore Northern Ireland's competitive edge. So I think the Assembly is helping to keep us on our toes, and that is one of the main benefits of the proper scrutiny of direct rule.

The extension of derating to 100 per cent has tackled one of the major costs for industry and a £60 million a year electricity subsidy currently helps to contain another. It is important however that we should seek to make advances on the energy front by means other than ever increasing cash subsidies and I know that the Assembly will consider carefully our energy discussion paper, which is to be published shortly.

Northern Ireland continues to have a great deal to offer those who seek the means of economic and industrial expansion. We have a splendid natural environment, first rate communications and an excellent record for enterprise, energy and good industrial relations. That is industry, but we must not forget agriculture, as if the Agriculture Committee of the Assembly would ever allow us to do so.

Rev Dr Paisley: Hear, hear.

28 June 1983

**Mr Prior:** Agriculture is a key sector of our economy, and one to which the Agriculture Committee have rightly devoted a lot of time. I am glad that the incomes of most farmers have now recovered from the very low levels of 1980, but I realise that the intensive livestock sector, particularly egg production, is in a difficult position at present because of the higher costs of feedings-stuffs and the relatively low market prices. I hope that this is a temporary phase and I wish to emphasise that the Government have done everything in their power to help to minimise the difficulties. We have had some successes, including the new arrangements for 50,000 tonnes of grain to come here through the intervention system, but, as Commissioner Dalsager indicated when he visited Northern Ireland recently, the problem, certainly in intensive production, is Europe-wide. But let us not forget that expenditure on Northern Ireland agriculture is very considerable: some £170 million from the Department of Agriculture for Northern Ireland, the Ministry of Agriculture, and EC funds, including the £30 million in special funding which is not available in Great Britain, plus the benefits of the cash spent by the intervention board in maintaining farm-gate prices.

I have tried to highlight some of the major issues facing Northern Ireland. I have outlined the Government's response and underlined the important contribution which the Assembly have made, are making, and, I earnestly hope, will continue to make, to the resolution of our difficulties. But I also recognise that resolution of these problems cannot be achieved without further political progress towards a stable system of government. This is not only my perception; it is one shared by investors in America, Europe, and London, whose commitment to our wider development we also need.

What more then is needed to encourage this process of political development? I believe that there must be a greater recognition by the majority that the cross-community support which underpins the 1982 Act is not easily achievable. It is something which needs to be worked for. It requires an open-minded and generous approach to the needs and aspirations and fears of the minority community. Government indeed have a role to play in this, but it is not a leading one. The elected representatives of the majority in this Assembly have a crucial role. They are the people who have much in common with the minority community. They share a common interest in economic and social development. They inhabit the same local areas, and they desire administration of their own affairs.

Of course the road to stability and progress calls for an equal commitment from the minority. Many in that community have taken a courageous stand against violence. But they need to go further. The minority community do not have a monopoly on distinctive needs, aspirations and fears. It is essential that they recognise this and that the best way forward is for those who believe in constitutional politics to participate in this Assembly. That would not require them to sacrifice their position nor deny their aspirations. This Government remains fully committed to the restoration of devolved powers only on a basis which has clear and unambiguous cross-community support - just as it remains committed also to the principle that constitutional change to the status of Northern Ireland come only by the consent of a majority. I believe the minority community have much to gain by working, within the framework of the 1982 Act, in order to achieve political progress. I hope that those already sitting in the Assembly will help to demonstrate that there is a worthwhile function for the minority here. There is now a crucial division in Northern Ireland between those who oppose violence and those who support it. If those opposed to violence fail to find ways to work together in the common interest the beneficiaries are likely to be the terrorists.

28 June 1983

Progress must be made on the principles which Parliament has outlined. I am always ready to listen to views as to how those principles can be best met. The impetus for a stable future must come from the Northern Ireland community itself.

At the start of a new Parliament I am deeply conscious of our responsibilities. I commit Her Majesty's Government and myself as Secretary of State to seeking ways towards peace and prosperity for all the people of the province and I thank the Members of the Assembly both for the manner in which they have listened to my statement this afternoon and for the work that they have been carrying out during the past few months in the interests of Northern Ireland as a whole. I believe that we have made some progress. Much remains to be done. I express my willingness to do all that I can. I hope that perhaps as time goes on we can make some further progress.

**Mr Speaker:** There will be approximately 25 minutes for questions so may I emphasise once again that the shorter the questions the more honourable Members will be called, it is completely in your hands.

3.07 pm

**Mr Molyneaux:** I am sure we will all respond to your request for brevity, but might I express appreciation of the Secretary of State's acceptance of our invitation to come to the Assembly so early in this new Parliament. We are approaching what might be regarded as the end of the first session of the Assembly without having made any real progress towards the objective of the Northern Ireland Act 1982, namely Stage II and the devolution of powers. How does the Secretary of State propose to overcome the sheer impossibility of obtaining the cross-community consent, as required in the Queen's Speech and reiterated by the Secretary of State today, when the other representatives who are not present have no intention of attending let alone of consenting?

Also could I ask if the Secretary of State agrees that the phrase in the manifesto from which he has quoted, "will continue to be offered a framework ... through the Assembly," is misleading when that offer itself is made on a condition which can never be met by this Assembly however hard we attending the Assembly may try. Will he come clean on what is meant precisely by "cross-community consent" in these circumstances, and particularly by that phrase "widespread support throughout the community", which appears to indicate or imply that that consent could be given elsewhere other than within the Assembly? In his final appeal to the majority he used words to the effect that the objectives were not easily attainable and I am sure he will come to recognise that that is an impossibility, particularly within the terms of the unamended 1982 Act.

**Mr Prior:** I think that it would be quite wrong if we believed that there was some dramatic solution which the Assembly could adopt and Parliament could accept in the space of a few months. Many of us thought that the Assembly would take some while to move, as the hon Gentleman has mentioned, from, as it were, Phase I to Phase II and in no way should one be down-hearted that, after the first session, more progress towards a devolved administration has not been made. I would have thought that it would have been extraordinary if, in the space of a few months, it had become possible to make that further progress. Of course I want to see, and I have made it perfectly clear, the SDLP, the constitutional party of the minority, playing a part in the Assembly. I have to make it clear that fundamental to my view of widespread acceptance and support, and to the Government's view, is that the minority has to be represented here and has to be seen to be playing a part before it would be possible to make any progress. I do not say that out of any doctrinal view. I say that because I simply do not believe that there can be a stable or satisfactory position unless that

28 June 1983

happens. That is, I think, how I would define proposals from both sides of the community. This does not mean that unanimity is required. It does mean that those advancing proposals must seek to secure genuine cross-community support for them. I do not think that we should for one moment give up the chance, the opportunity or the ideal that that implies, and I think it would be very pessimistic to use the word "never" in the way that the hon Gentleman has done this afternoon.

**Rev Dr Paisley:** Would the right hon Gentleman take it from me that the words that he has just used will give great encouragement to the SDLP, for he is putting into their hands a total veto of this Assembly? Would he take it from me this afternoon that we regret this statement that he has just made that except the bulk of the minority agree there can be no devolution? Forty-three per cent of the nationalist vote went to the gunmen at the last election. They are now a bulk of that particular minority. At the next election - and I am neither a prophet nor the son of a prophet - they will obtain over 50 per cent of the nationalist vote. They will be the majority of the minority. Is the right hon Gentleman telling us this afternoon that there can be no devolution until we make peace with the gunmen? The people I represent in this House will have no truck and no peace with these gunmen.

I would like to pass to the question of security. Could I remind the right hon Gentleman of the principle that he has outlined, which I welcome, that security must be top priority and that there can be no real progress constitutionally or economically until the terrorists are defeated? But is he aware that we have had a new departure by the terrorists over the last 24 hours and that threats on contractors and their workmen have now developed into attacks upon workmen? Is he aware that there has been an attempt to kill one and the cruel murder of another? In view of that will he now reverse the policy of running down the women police Reserve and the male police Reserve and the policy of closing up UDR depots across our province? If the House of Commons is going to pass a law bringing back the death penalty will the right hon Gentleman give us an assurance that he will move with speed to see that that law is implemented in this province?

**Hon Members:** Hear, hear.

**Rev Dr Paisley:** In regard to agriculture, could he explain to this House why £9 million was underspent? [Interruption]

It is not very often we have the Secretary of State - and by the way it was my party that originated the Motion to have him here, so we had better get that correct.

Last year £9 million became available because of underspending and was divided among other Departments. Why was that £9 million not given to the intensive sector to save at least the pig and poultry industries and the potato industry of our province?

**Mr Prior:** Of course the hon Gentleman is correct - and I share his view and that of the Assembly - to say that we will have no truck with gunmen: of course we will not. But what I am trying to suggest is that unless we seek to move forward with the support of the minority community there is no manner by which we can prevent the growth of Provisional Sinn Fein and their support for violence. I believe that that is part of the political basis on which the Government seek to make progress. I go further than that and say that no one party can have a veto. I have made it clear that political stability and progress can only be made in Northern Ireland if the proposals have the support and acceptance of both communities in the province. Obviously, therefore, when I talk about the view of the SDLP, it is crucial as it is the party that represents and articulates the views of the majority of the minority. So I have to say that and I think it perfectly right that I should do so.



28 June 1983

On the question of security, if there is a change in the policy of the gunman then, of course, this is a matter which I shall be discussing with, and no doubt have advice from, the Chief Constable and the GOC. But I do not believe that it calls for a change in the policy that we have adopted towards increasing the size of the police force of the RUC, both as far as the actual force itself is concerned and the Full-time Reserve. Of course one deeply regrets what has happened in the last 24 hours, and our sympathy goes out to the people who have suffered in this manner. Some weeks ago I did pass on the advice of one of the Members of this Assembly to the RUC, as I was requested to do and, therefore, I regret even more that there has been this very unfortunate attack on a contractor's man. As for the death penalty, I think it would be far better to wait until there has been a vote in the House of Commons before commenting further.

As for agriculture, I shall have to check with my hon Friend the exact underspend in the Department of Agriculture, because I know that in other areas of agriculture there was considerable overspend. All I can say is that had we directed any further cash towards either pigs or poultry, we should have been in contravention of the European Community, and we would also have got into a great deal more trouble with intensive producers on the other side of the channel. So to that extent, it would not have been possible to divert in extra resources to them.

3.18 pm

**Mr Napier:** Mr Speaker, first of all through you, may I thank the Secretary of State for coming here today and for the great frankness of the views which he has put forward in this Assembly. One matter I would like to pursue with the Secretary of State is the question of the devolution of power. The Secretary of State has made it quite clear that there will be no devolution of power without widespread support, and he has made it quite clear that that support must come from both sections of the divided community in Northern Ireland. I would ask the Secretary of State if he can state that it is not the Government's intention to devolve power back to Northern Ireland on the basis of majority community support, without the support and acceptance of a sizeable section of the minority community.

Secondly, I would ask the Secretary of State if he would confirm - what I and my party believe - that unless constitutional nationalists who deplore and condemn violence are brought within the administration of any new devolution of power in Northern Ireland, the only people who will gain will be the men of terror and the men of violence.

**Mr Prior:** As for the first question of the hon Member, I must say categorically that I do not believe that the Government or Parliament, and more importantly Parliament, would ever agree to devolve power to this Assembly on the basis of support from one section of the community only. I make that absolutely clear. I would be deluding everyone if I thought that there was any chance of any other arrangements being made. I have to go on from that to say that it was because I recognised, and the Government recognised, how difficult this was going to be that we thought that there was great merit in having these various phases in the Assembly. It has given the Assembly an opportunity to play a very important role even before it was possible to move on to devolved government.

Secondly, I should like to say equally strongly, that I believe it is vital that those who formed the constitutional majority on the Nationalist side should take their seats and play a part in constitutional politics, because unless they do, I believe that the sort of things which the hon Gentleman for Antrim was mentioning could come about, and

28 June 1983

so I believe that that is equally important. None of us underestimate the difficulties. If there were not great difficulties, as I have said on a number of occasions, there would not be a Secretary of State and there would not be direct rule. I believe that we have to accept and recognise these difficulties and seek, in every way we can, to overcome them.

**Mr Speaker:** I hope that each of the remaining questioners will put one question only to the Secretary of State, and put it succinctly.

May I add, as I hear concurrence from the DUP Benches, that they will be shorter than short in view of Dr Paisley's lengthy question.

**Hon Members:** Hear, hear.

3.21 pm

**Rev Martin Smyth:** I welcome the opportunity to discover that some of our public debate with the media is listened to. Whether it is headed is another matter.

There are many questions I would like to ask, but a specific one I will ask is about the economy. What representations are Her Majesty's Government making to the Government of the United States to see that Short Brothers and Harland get their fair crack of the whip in military orders, especially when we are members of NATO? There is at least some discussion that some military orders will be going to a country not within NATO. May I ask a subsidiary question? Will the Secretary of State recognise that we in Northern Ireland see a degree of hypocrisy, where we are told that his Ministers will not have truck with terrorists and yet they meet them?

**Mr Prior:** That is a very different question from the first part of the hon Gentleman's question and I will deal with that part. The answer is that we are putting all the pressure we can, and giving all the information that we can, to the American Government and to the American Congress, and the committees concerned, about the subject of Shorts. I am glad to say that the unions have joined in with their support on this matter. We have been very careful to see that the Americans have the true story about fair employment practices operating in Shorts and not the very warped view that they have been getting from the Irish caucus. We are doing all that we can, and have been over a period of time, and we will continue to do all we can to help secure this order for Short Brothers. In the meanwhile I think the fact that a number of American airlines are buying the 360 as well as the 330, and the fact that the Government of the Republic, through its airline, has bought 360s is itself an indication that a lot of the propaganda being put out by the Irish caucus is utterly untrue and has to be refuted in every way possible.

As for the hon Gentleman's other question, it is true that on one occasion, in a deputation, a Minister met one Member of the Assembly who has not taken his seat - a Member of Provisional Sinn Fein. I have made my views perfectly clear on this and it remains Her Majesty's Government's position.

3.24 pm

**Rev Ivan Foster:** I welcome, as I am sure every Member of the House welcomes, the Secretary of State's condemnation of the murder last evening in Omagh of a Protestant workman, and the attempted murder of another Protestant workman at Derrylin in County Fermanagh. I want to ask the Secretary of State about the

28 June 1983

attempted murder of the workman in Derrylin since it is related to a subject which I raised with him in a letter dated 8 March. Would the Secretary of State assure the House that every possible effort is being made to safeguard Protestant contractors and their workforces who successfully tender for public works contracts in Border areas, and furthermore will he assure the House that every precaution will be taken to stop a situation developing whereby IRA front organisations are permitted to operate as legitimate public works contractors and so finance their terror campaign from the public purse?

**Mr Prior:** As I have already stated, we were grateful to the hon Member for giving us the information about the risk. We passed this information to the RUC, who agreed to take appropriate action. It is impossible to provide 100 per cent, 24 hour cover, and it is deeply regretted that yesterday's tragedy took place and could not have been prevented. I will certainly see that there are further discussions on what the hon Gentleman has just said.

**Mr Cook:** I wonder if the right hon Gentleman is aware that the community have welcomed, in general terms, the European Community's Urban Renewal Regulation to which he referred in his statement earlier this afternoon. But is he also aware that Mr Butler, his deputy, issued a statement a week ago in which comments were made about it which were different from the comments made by Lord Mansfield in the City Hall on Friday evening and different from the comments made by Mr Christopher Patten on the radio, also on Friday, and that his own comments this afternoon are different again. He has referred to a genuine increase in expenditure here, and of course if that is the case, Members will welcome this, but there is confusion, perhaps because the specific question of additionality and the use of the word additionality has been avoided this afternoon. Will the right hon Gentleman accept that urgent clarification is needed on this and that a lead is required by Her Majesty's Government. Perhaps the best way of clarifying it would now or in the very near future be to name the specific schemes and projects which will now be brought into the Government's programme, in order to take advantage of the Urban Renewal Regulation.

**Mr Prior:** I will do my best to add a fourth view to the 3 views that have already been expressed. As I understand it, what we did this year was to include a figure of £16 million in public expenditure for this year, in anticipation that although the defunct Housing Regulation would not go through, there would be an Urban Renewal Regulation in place of it. That £16 million has now been translated into £19 million to take account of inflation, and I think some movement in the exchanges since that time. That £16 million which was in the public expenditure programme for this year would have had to have been withdrawn had we not received the additional money. The money is for urban renewal, which involves a whole range of activities; leisure, recreation and community facilities, tourist amenities, land reclamation, industrial zones, harbour facilities, public utility, infrastructures, transportation networks, urban drainage, et cetera, but of course does not exclude housing, although I have to make it perfectly clear that it is not specifically for housing. The additionality point is that in any refunds that Her Majesty's Government gets from the EC, the figure of £19 million will be in excess of that. That is for this year, we cannot yet state what will happen in years 2 and 3. But of that £19 million the British Government have already contributed about 21 per cent and so in fact the additional factor amounts to some 79 per cent. That is the extra money over and above what Northern Ireland would have been allowed for public expenditure this year, which is the contribution being made by the Community. I will see that a further statement is made. That, I think, is as far as I can go this afternoon. If it is not now sufficiently clear, I will see that a further statement is made.

28 June 1983

3.31 pm

**Mr Maginnis:** Would the Secretary of State accept that we would all like to accept what he says when he states that the Chief Constable and the GOC will be given all the resources they require to defeat terrorism? Does this then suggest to the House that these 2 gentlemen are content to play with manpower figures in the security services? When the Secretary of State came to this House to tell us that he was increasing the numbers in the RUC, he did not tell us that these numbers would be sufficient only to replace members of the Regular Army who were being withdrawn from the constituency I represent and other constituencies along the Frontier. Further more would the Secretary of State accept that it is now necessary to look carefully at the automatic 50 per cent remission which is given to prisoners in Northern Ireland, and that we should stop opening the doors and pouring unrepentant terrorists onto the streets, as we do week after week?

**Mr Prior:** I would like to start by congratulating the hon Member on his election to the House of Commons and tell him that I have dealt with a number of these matters before. We have looked at the 50 per cent remission and decided not to make changes, but this is something which, of course, I am prepared to discuss with him and his committee. The deployment of the RUC and the Army is a matter for professional judgment. It is true that we are trying to make certain changes in the deployment of the Army as we build up the strength of the RUC, in the belief that the RUC is more, capable and equipped to deal with the problems that we face. All the matters that he raised with me are matters which we can discuss at the appropriate time.

3.33 pm

**Mr Kane:** Does the Secretary of State agree that given the present financial stringencies affecting educational provision in the province, future public expenditure should be channelled towards existing educational institutions in Northern Ireland, with priority given to citizens of the United Kingdom? Would the Secretary of State reject the suggestion, made yesterday by the Select Committee Report, that a further and higher educational institution should be established in Londonderry, which should specifically and partly serve citizens of the Irish Republic?

**Mr Prior:** I think that it would be better if I gave a considered reply in due course to the Select Committee Report, rather than indulge in off the cuff remarks this afternoon.

**Mr Speaker:** We might be able to fit in 3 more hon Members if their questions last no more than 15 seconds, and I will call 3 hon Members on that basis.

3.34 pm

**Mr Cushnahan:** I listened with great interest to the Secretary of State's reaffirmation of the need to involve constitutional nationalists in a settlement. Bearing in mind the remarks of Members about giving the SDLP a veto by virtue of the fact it is not participating in this Assembly, would the Secretary of State agree that if people want to encourage the SDLP to participate, an offer of power-sharing would have that result, as Mr Hume himself indicated in his speech to the Irish Association? Consequent upon that, would the Secretary of State not agree that the growth of Sinn Fein is directly related to the continued refusal of Unionist politicians to make any concessions to constitutional nationalism? Would he also agree that the time has come for the British Government to grasp the nettle and decide whether they are prepared

28 June 1983

to let a very small minority of the population of the United Kingdom continue to stand in the way of political progress, specified by the sovereign Parliament in Westminster as being on a power-sharing basis?

**Mr Prior:** I cannot answer those questions in the space of 15 seconds. I think I have dealt with those questions reasonably in the statement that I have already made.

**Mr Edgar Graham:** The Secretary of State in his statement, and in answer to several questions like that raised by the hon Member for North Down (Mr Cushnahan), indicated that the Assembly cannot progress without the consent of the SDLP. Is the Secretary of State aware that the SDLP have continually said that Northern Ireland is an unworkable state and therefore they will not contribute to making Northern Ireland, or this Assembly, work, and if he is saying that he is signing the death knell for this Assembly.

**Mr Prior:** I emphatically reject that as a viewpoint that is acceptable. I have not by any means said that the SDLP is the only party which could have a veto. All parties have a veto over political progress if they wish to have it, but it is quite clear that since the SDLP represent the majority, of the minority without their presence in the Assembly and without their playing a part, there could be no progress towards devolved government. I make that absolutely clear. I would not want anyone in any part of this Assembly to be under any illusion about the manner and the way in which the Government have given this undertaking. It is written quite clearly in the Northern Ireland Act of 1982 and I see no way in which that is likely to be changed.

**Mr Robinson:** Will the Secretary of State take it from me that the reason why many so called Loyalist prisoners are refusing to leave their cells is because they are in danger of losing their lives if they go through the cell door? Will he tell this House what measures he and his Government are going to take to ensure the safety of prisoners when they are under his custody, and will he further tell this House if power sharing is the only way that we can move forward in Northern Ireland?

**Mr Prior:** I think we have to understand that the hon Gentleman's views on what is happening inside the prisons is over-simplified. There is evidence of a good deal of collusion between people on the Republican side and on the Loyalist side -

**Rev Dr Paisley:** Where is the evidence?

**Mr Prior:** - within the prisons to cause the sort of problems which we have faced. But generally speaking, I think that with one or two regrettable exceptions, the prison staff have been able to cope with threats of violence and with the problems in the prisons and will continue to do so. We are seeking in every way we can to act responsibly, and at the same time sympathetically, to some of the very serious problems which exist. A number of Members have visited the prisons and have seen for themselves the manner in which we are seeking to deal with it.

As for power sharing, I think I have made the views of the Government abundantly clear. I have thought that there were ways in which we could get over the problem of power sharing, but it does not alter the fact that there has to be a widespread acceptance of whatever devolved administration comes about. That need not be power sharing, but it has got to be widespread acceptance.

ACCESS FOR THE DISABLED:  
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE REPORT ON DoE CONSULTATIVE DOCUMENT

Statement by Environment Committee Chairman

3.39 pm

**Mr Robinson:** The Department of the Environment are considering a proposed Amendment to the Building Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1977 to cover access to