

PS
PS/LADY YOUNG
PS/MR. WHITNEY

PS/PCS

~~SIR J. BURNETT~~

MR. JENKINS

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PS/MR R. ANDREW
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MR. SPENNER

MR. ANGE

J. LYON
~~MR. BOYS SMITH~~

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SIR B. ARMSTRONG

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GRS680

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FM DUBLIN 031115Z JUL 84

TO IMMEDIATE FCO

TELEGRAM NUMBER 305 OF 3 JULY 1984

INFO IMMEDIATE: NIO (B) NIO (L) WASHINGTON BIS NEW YORK

UKMIS NEW YORK OTTAWA

FORUM DEBATE: PRESS COMMENT

1. ALL THREE DUBLIN MORNING PAPERS CARRY EDITORIAL COMMENT ON YESTERDAY'S HOUSE OF COMMONS DEBATE, ON LARGELY PREDICTABLE LINES.

2. THE IRISH TIMES TAKES THE VIEW THAT:

'THE (BRITISH) GOVERNMENT ON THE EVIDENCE OF (MR PRIOR'S) WORDS IS NOT SAYING ANYTHING NEW. IT IS NOT ADDRESSING ITSELF SERIOUSLY TO THE REPORT OF THE NEW IRELAND FORUM. IT IS STILL SAYING....'NOT AN INCH''.

THE IRISH TIMES RECOGNISES SOME POSITIVE ELEMENTS IN MR PRIOR'S SPEECH WHICH SUGGEST 'THAT HE IS GOING BACK.... TO THE SUNNINGDALE CONCEPT', BUT:

'NOTHING THAT MR PRIOR HAS SAID YESTERDAY WILL GO ANY PART OF THE WAY TOWARDS ENDING THE KILLING AND THE MAIMING AND THE HATING. NOTHING THAT MR PRIOR SAID GETS TO THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM WHICH COSTS IRISH LIVES WEEK IN, WEEK OUT''.

3. NEVERTHELESS, THE IRISH TIMES POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT SPECULATES THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WILL BE PLEASED BY THE TONE AND CONTENT OF MR PRIOR'S SPEECH, ALTHOUGH NEITHER GOVERNMENT NOR OPPOSITION WAS PREPARED TO COMMENT LAST NIGHT. MR PRIOR'S

SPECULATES THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT WILL BE PLEASED BY THE TONE AND CONTENT OF MR PRIOR'S SPEECH, ALTHOUGH NEITHER GOVERNMENT NOR OPPOSITION WAS PREPARED TO COMMENT LAST NIGHT. MR PRIOR'S "FIFTH REALITY" IN PARTICULAR IS THOUGHT LIKELY TO CAUSE SATISFACTION IN DUBLIN.

4. THE IRISH PRESS HAS NOTHING GOOD TO SAY ABOUT THE DEBATE:

"WHAT WE GOT WAS A DULL, MONOTONOUS, FLAT RECITATION OF CLICHES FROM MR PRIOR THAT PAID NO JUSTICE TO THE EFFORT AND HOPES WHICH WENT INTO THE REPORT'S COMPILATION..... THE MESSAGE IS - THERE IS NO MESSAGE. THERE WILL BE MORE CONCENTRATION ON SECURITY, MORE LOSS OF LIFE, MORE IN JAIL AND NORTHERN IRELAND WILL RUMBLE ON IN POISONOUS HOPELESSNESS, WHICH WILL AFFECT NOT ALONE THE NORTH BUT ALSO THE REPUBLIC.... THE PROCEEDINGS IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS YESTERDAY WOULD HAVE SERVED TO BENEFIT ONLY THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE IN CONSTITUTIONAL APPROACHES".

5. THE IRISH INDEPENDENT TAKES A MUCH MORE POSITIVE LINE:

"NOTHING SAID BY MR PRIOR.... YESTERDAY PREVENTS A MOVE FORWARD BY THE BRITISH GOVERNMENT TO A POINT WHERE DISCUSSIONS BASED ON THE ATTITUDES REVEALED IN THE FORUM REPORT CAN START... THE IRISH GOVERNMENT SHOULD BE ABLE TO FEEL A QUIET CONFIDENCE THIS MORNING THAT THE LOG-JAM HAS BEGUN TO BREAK UP".

ACCEPTING THE NEED FOR CAUTION IN THE RUN UP TO THE MARCHING SEASON, THE INDEPENDENT ACKNOWLEDGES THAT:

"MR PRIOR MADE A THOUGHTFUL AND UNDERSTANDING CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEBATE, ALL THE TIME WITH MRS THATCHER BESIDE HIM".

IF MR PRIOR'S OWN PREFERENCE WAS FOR DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT, THE INDEPENDENT RECOGNISES A SUBTLE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN HIS OPPOSITION TO THE UNITARY STATE OPTION IN THE FORUM REPORT, AND HIS ARGUMENT THAT THE OTHER OPTIONS "WOULD NOT BE ACCEPTABLE - IN THE NORTH"

6. THE INDEPENDENT ALSO WELCOMES MR PRIOR'S RECOGNITION THAT THE IRISH GOVERNMENT "HAS A SAY IN THE NORTH", AND HIS STATEMENT THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE GOVERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATION OF NORTHERN IRELAND WITHIN THE UK THERE IS NO UNIONIST OR NATIONALIST VETO. IT SEES THE LOW KEY OF THE DEBATE AS HELPFUL AND CONCLUDES:

"THE TAOISEACH CAN NOW SET HIS EXPERTS TO WORK ON PRACTICAL PROPOSALS FOR THE NEXT MEETING WITH MRS THATCHER".

GOODISON

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