

CFPC



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
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Charles Powell Esq
Private Secretary
No 10 Downing Street
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27th November 1985

Dear Charles,

attached

LETTER TO THE PRIME MINISTER FROM SIR ELDON GRIFFITHS

You asked for comments on the draft letter which the Prime Minister proposed to send to Sir Eldon Griffiths following his agreement not to intervene during the Prime Minister's speech during the Debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

I have two points. The more important is that we fear that a meeting between the Police Federation and the Prime Minister would be open to misinterpretation, not least by the RUC Chief Constable, Sir John Hermon. His relations with the Federation in Northern Ireland are less than cordial and he is only too likely to regard such a meeting as undermining his own authority. It could also set an unfortunate precedent, not just in Northern Ireland but for GB more widely to suggest that bodies such as the Federation, or indeed other bodies such as the Prison Officers' Association in Northern Ireland, had such a right of access to the Prime Minister. Their GB colleagues would almost certainly want to follow suit sooner or later. If, however, you considered that there was no alternative to a meeting, might I suggest that it should be with our Secretary of State* (just as the Federation in England and Wales would most naturally look to voice their concerns to the Home Secretary)? Indeed the Secretary of State is currently considering a separate request from Sir Eldon for an early meeting with the NI Police Federation to discuss just the sort of issues they are likely to want to raise at any meeting with the Prime Minister.

On the responses to Sir Eldon's two points, Robert Andrew has suggested that sub-paragraph (ii) could be more happily worded as follows:

"The RUC will, I am sure, continue to enforce the law even handedly (as they demonstrated at Portadown earlier this year); and any steps necessary to ensure their ability to do so will be taken."

* i.e. not with the PM.

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Incidentally, you may have seen that Sir Eldon intervened during the Secretary of State's speech this afternoon to ask the first of the two points he would have put to the Prime Minister yesterday, and he received suitable reassurances.

I am copying this to Stephen Boys Smith in the Home Office.

*Yours Sincerely
Neil Ward.*

N D WARD

CONFIDENTIAL

Ireland, Anglo-Irish Agreement Pt 12



forward

blind copy to
Northern Ireland
Levy.

Dr. W. Sir Eldon Griffiths MP

02/12/80

MP

[Please type for
MP's signature.]

Thank you so much for your letter about the Ireland Debate. It was considerate of you not to have intervened during my speech with your two points: it would rather have broken up the argument. The answers to your two questions are:

(i) No, the Inter-Governmental Conference cannot interfere in the way in which the police enforce the law. This is made clear in Article 9(b) of the Agreement; and

I am sure, continue to

(ii) The RUC will enforce the law and any steps necessary to ensure their ability to do so will be taken (as at the time of Portadown earlier this year).

~~I should be ready to receive a small delegation as you request and suggest you bring them to see me at 1100 hours on 18 December.~~

Think it would be more appropriate for Tom King to see a delegation from the Northern Ireland Police Federation. But I would

Sir Eldon Griffiths, M.P.

even-handedly (as was demonstrated at Portadown earlier this year);

be happy to see you & your wife with us on their behalf.

[Mr. Robinson]

The *Belfast Telegraph*, never a close friend of the unionist community, said:

"Even those who, like this newspaper, can see benefit flowing from closer consultation with Dublin, must draw the line at such institutionalised links between the two countries."

I say again that it is not only the Ulster Unionists and the Democratic Unionists who believe that the deal goes too far. The ordinary citizens of Northern Ireland, never previously involved in politics, were present at the mass demonstration at the city hall in Belfast.

I was born a free citizen of the United Kingdom. I was brought up to respect the Union flag. At my father's knee I was taught the love that I should have for the monarchy, and throughout my life I have put that into practice. I was nurtured on the principle of the greatness of our British heritage. I have taught all that to my children. I now have to tell this House that over the last 17 cruel years, when Ulster has been confronted by a vicious campaign of terrorism, not one of the unionist community was prepared to allow that campaign to shatter his loyalty to the United Kingdom.

It is not a one-way street. It never has been for Ulster. We cheered with this country during the Falklands campaign. Ulster suffered its losses just as many did on this side of the Irish sea. During the second world war, we made sacrifices, just as many people in this part of the United Kingdom, and we did it without conscription. During the first world war, Ulster gave of its best for Britain. After watching the Ulster Volunteers on the Somme when 5,000 Ulstermen lost their lives at the enemy's hand, a great British general—General Spender—said, "I am not an Ulsterman but there is no one in the world whom I would rather be after seeing the Ulster Volunteers in action." In peace and in war Ulster stood by the kingdom. That has been the way of loyal Ulster.

I never believed that I would see a British Government who were prepared to damage Ulster's position in the United Kingdom. Our resolve has been hardened by the bitter times in past years when a terrorist campaign was aimed at undermining our position in the United Kingdom. There would never have been a Hillsborough castle agreement if the IRA had not been bombing and shooting. That is a fact of life. Can one blame the people of Northern Ireland for thinking that violence works? It makes the task harder for those of us who chose the way of constitutional politics to tell people not to involve themselves in violence.

I wish that the House had a sense of the deep feeling of anger and betrayal in Northern Ireland. Yesterday, while I was waiting in an ante-room in No. 10 Downing street before meeting the Prime Minister I saw on the wall a portrait of Rudyard Kipling, who was a great patriot. I recall the words of his poem "Ulster 1912", which begins:

"The dark eleventh hour
Draws on and sees us sold
To every evil power
We fought against of old."

Later, it states:
"The blood our fathers split,
Our love, our toils, our pains,
Are counted us for guilt,
And only bind our chains.
Before an Empire's eyes
The traitor claims his price.
What need of further lies?
We are the sacrifice."

6.3 pm

Mr. John Hume (Foyle): Listening to some of the hon. Members who have spoken in the debate one could have been forgiven for thinking that we were not discussing a serious problem, but, after listening to the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), one should not be in any doubt that we are discussing a serious problem.

I was glad to see a full House at the beginning of the debate. That is the first achievement of the Anglo-Irish conference. It shows that the serious human problem facing the peoples of these islands has at last been given the priority that it deserves. It has been put at the centre of the stage.

I was glad also that a meeting took place at the highest level between the British and the Irish Governments at which a framework for ongoing discussion was set up. In an excellent unionist speech, the hon. Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow) told us what we already knew—that he was a committed unionist and that he did not particularly like to associate with the loud-mouthed persons with whom I have to live. We did not learn from him of the problem in Northern Ireland—that we have a deeply divided society. The hon. Gentleman did not bother to analyse why we have a deeply divided society and the political instability and violence which the agreement seeks to address.

This is the first time that we have had a real framework within which to address the problem. The problem is not just about relationships with Northern Ireland. One need only listen to the speeches of Northern Ireland Members to know that it is about relationships in Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Those interlocking relationships should be addressed within the framework of the problem. The framework of the problem can only be the framework of the solution, and that is the British-Irish framework. There is no road towards a solution to this problem that does not contain risks. The road that has been chosen by both Governments is the road of maximum consensus and is, therefore, the road of minimum risk. We should welcome that.

Our community has just gone through 15 years of the most serious violence that it has ever seen. Northern Ireland has a population of 1.5 million people. About 2,500 people have lost their lives in political violence—the equivalent of 86,000 people in Britain. Twenty thousand people have been seriously maimed. When I say "maimed", I mean maimed. That is the equivalent of 750,000 people on this island. About £11 billion worth of damage has been caused to the economies of Ireland—North and South. In 1969, public expenditure by the British Government in subsidy, subvention or whatever one calls it was £74 million; today it is £1.5 billion. Two new prisons have been built and a third is about to be opened—our only growth industry. There are 18-year-olds who have known nothing but violence and armed soldiers on their streets. Young people reach 18 and then face the highest unemployment we have ever had. Forty-four per cent. of the population is under 25.

If that is not a time bomb for the future what is? If that is not a problem that needs the serious attention of the House and the serious attention that the Prime Ministers of Britain and of the Republic of Ireland have given it in the past 18 months, what is? Is this not a subject that screams out for political leaders in Northern Ireland to take a good look at themselves, their parties and the leadership

that they have given? There is only one clear-cut lesson to be learnt from this tragedy—that our past attitudes have brought us where we are. Unless we agree to take a hard look at our past attitudes, we shall be going nowhere fast and we shall be committing ourselves to the dustbin of history, clutching our respective flagpoles.

We are being given some choices. The agreement gives us no more than an opportunity to begin the process of reconciliation. The choices offered to the people of Northern Ireland are the choices offered by hon. Members here present. The unionist parties have consistently sought to protect the integrity of their heritage in Ireland—the Protestant heritage—and no one should quarrel with that. A society is richer for its diversity. My quarrel with the unionist parties has been that they have sought to protect their heritage by holding all the power in their own hands and by basing that on sectarian solidarity. That is an exclusive use of power which is inherently violent because it permanently excludes a substantial section of the community from any say in its affairs.

That was spelt out clearly by the right hon. Member for Lagan Valley (Mr. Molyneaux) when he said that he offered an act of leadership. He was sincere. He said that the majority should assure the minority that they would be made part of society. He tells me that it is an act of leadership to make me and the people I represent part of our society 65 years after Northern Ireland was created.

We have been lectured about democracy and the democratic process by hon. Members from both unionist parties. They are practitioners of the democratic process. I do not want to spend too much time on examples of their practice, but they were the masters of gerrymander. Today their voices are somewhat muted, but they have not changed much.

In Belfast city council not one position on any board has gone to a minority representative. One council has even apologised to the electorate because it made a mistake in appointing a member of the SDLP to one position out of 105.

Mr. Patrick Nicholls (Teignbridge): The hon. Gentleman is complaining because his party cannot win elections. Many people here have to face the fact that their party cannot win elections. It is a fact of life, but it is not a reason for power sharing.

Mr. Hume: I thought that the hon. Gentleman's intervention might be intelligent. I shall not lecture him on how Northern Ireland was set up, how it was deliberately created and how from day one it has been run on a sectarian basis. The only way to break that down is through partnership.

Hon. Members from both unionist parties have lectured us about democracy. That brings us to the heart of the Irish problem. The sovereignty of this Parliament is the basis of the British system and of the rule of law. The sovereignty of Parliament has been defied only twice in this century—on both occasions by Ulster Unionists.

In 1912 the Ulster Unionists defied the sovereign wish of Parliament to grant home rule. That was only devolution within the United Kingdom. They objected and accepted instead home rule for themselves. That taught them a lesson which they have never forgotten—that if one threatens a British Government or British Parliament and produces crowds in the streets from the Orange lodges the British will back down. Others learnt from that that if

one wins by the democratic process the British will back down to their loyalist friends and then they say, "Why not use force instead?" Those two forces are still at the heart of preventing a development in relationships within Ireland. Those who threaten violence are those who use it. The same two forces are opposing the agreement today.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): Does the hon. Gentleman recall that in 1969 he brought on to the streets of Ulster the hordes who, when he left them alone, fell into the hands of violent men? The hon. Gentleman says that he is not allowed to share responsibility in Northern Ireland, but I have told him before that the SDLP refused to put their names forward for membership of the council of which I am a member and tried to nominate Sinn Fein members. Perhaps the hon. Gentleman will apply his mind to that.

Mr. Hume: I am applying my mind to the record of the unionist parties, the members of which have spoken today. I shall apply my mind to my own party later. I am expecting everyone to do a little rethinking.

The logic of the road down which the unionist leadership is taking its people is inescapable. Unionists once again are prepared to defy the sovereign will of this Parliament. When they come back after their elections and Parliament says that it refuses to back down, what will they do? Where will that lead us? They are going down the UDI road. That is their logic. They say that they are loyal to the United Kingdom. They are the loyalists and they must accept the sovereignty of Her Majesty's Parliament. But they do not.

What would happen if London Members resigned, were re-elected and returned saying that the majority in Greater London wanted to keep the Greater London council? That would lead to a complete breakdown of parliamentary sovereignty. That is where the unionists are leading us and they must know it.

It is sad in 1985 to meet people who are suspicious of everybody. They are suspicious of London, suspicious of Dublin and suspicious of the rest of the world. Worst of all, they are suspicious of the people with whom they share a little piece of land—their neighbours. It is sad that they never talk of the future except with fear. They talk always of the past. Their thoughts are encapsulated in that marvellous couplet

"To hell with the future and Long live the past.
May God in his mercy look down on Belfast."

That is more relevant than the words of Rudyard Kipling.

There has to be a better way. However grand we think we are, we are a small community. We cannot for ever live apart. Those sentiments were expressed in 1938 by Lord Craigavon, one of their own respected leaders. What are we sentencing our people to if we continue to live apart? People are entitled to live apart, but they are not entitled to ask everyone else to pay for it.

The other opposition to the agreement comes from the Provisional IRA and its political surrogates. They murder fellow Irishmen in the name of Irish unity. They murder members of the UDR and RUC—fellow Irishmen. Those members see themselves as protectors of their heritage, but the Provisional IRA brutally murder UDR and RUC members in the name of uniting the Irish people, the heritage with which we must unite if we are ever to unite Ireland.

[Mr. Hume]

The IRA's political wing is full of contradictions. I hope that no one in the House has any sympathy with it. Its members blow up factories and yet complain about unemployment. Its political spokesmen complain about cuts in public expenditure and in the same evening the military wing blows up £2 million of public expenditure in one street. A motion rightly condemns the execution of a young South African poet, but the IRA then shoots in the back of the head a young unemployed man and puts bullets in the head of a young man and his wife in west Belfast. The IRA complains about Diplock courts and yet runs kangaroo courts. What does that offer Ireland?

The hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson) asks about Irish unity. In the late 20th century it is nonsense that there should be divisions. If European nations which twice in this century alone have slaughtered one another by the millions can build institutions that allow them to grow together at their own speed, why cannot we do the same? He quoted me in an interview as saying that I was working for Irish unity, but I went on to say that those who think that Irish unity is round the corner are wired to the moon.

The divisions in Ireland go back well beyond partition. Centuries ago the leaders of Irish republicanism said that they wanted to unite Ireland by replacing the name of "Catholic-Protestant dissenter" with the common name of "Irishman". That was in 1795. Thirty years before partition Parnell said that Ireland could never be united or have its freedom until the fears of the Protestant minority in Ireland could be conciliated. This is a deep problem. It will not be solved in a week or in a fortnight. The agreement says that if Ireland is ever to be united it will be united only if those who want it to be united can persuade those who do not want it to be united. Sovereignty has nothing to do with maps but everything to do with people.

The people of Ireland are divided on sovereignty. They will be united only by a process of reconciliation in which both traditions in Ireland can take part and agree. If that happens, it will lead to the only unity that matters—a unity that accepts that the essence of unity is the acceptance of diversity.

Our third choice is the agreement. For the first time it sets up a framework that addresses the problem of the interlocking relationships between the people of both Irelands. It is the approach of maximum consensus. It is the way of minimum risk. For the first time—this is a positive element in the agreement—it respects the equal validity of both traditions. That is what the right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist party are complaining about. It is not a concession to me or to the people whom I represent. It is an absolute right to the legitimate expression of our identity and of the people I represent. Nobody can take that from us. The recognition of the equal validity of both traditions removes for the first time every excuse for the use of violence by anybody in Ireland to achieve his objective. A framework for genuine reconciliation is provided. Both sections of our community can take part in it.

Several hon. Members have said that the SDLP has a double veto on devolution. I have already said several times to them in public, but let me say it again so that they may hear it, that I believe in the partnership between the different sections of the community in Northern Ireland.

That is the best way to reconcile our differences. By working together to build our community we shall diminish the prejudices that divide us. The agreement means that I am prepared to sit down now and determine how we shall administer the affairs of Northern Ireland in a manner that is acceptable to both traditions.

Mr. Ivor Stanbrook (Orpington): Will the hon. Gentleman give way?

Mr. Hume: No. [HON. MEMBERS: "Give way."] I noticed that the right hon. and hon. Members of the Unionist parties were allowed to speak without interruption. When they were interrupted, they did not agree to give way.

The second question that appears to excite people about my party's attitude relates to the security forces and to policing in Northern Ireland. Our position—this is not a policy but a statement of fact that applies to every democratic society—is that law and order are based upon political consensus. Where political consensus is absent there is an Achilles heel. Violent men in Northern Ireland take advantage of that Achilles heel. For the first time the Intergovernmental Conference will address that question. It has committed itself to addressing the relationship between the community and the security forces. I want to give every encouragement to the conference to do so at the earliest possible opportunity. If it does so, it will have our fullest co-operation. I want the people whom I represent to play the fullest possible part, as do any citizens in a democratic society, in the process of peace and order. While we await the outcome we shall continue to give our full and unqualified support to the police force in impartially seeking out anybody who commits a crime in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Dalyell: On a point of order, Mr. Deputy Speaker. The hon. Member for Orpington (Mr. Stanbrook) has a position to state in this argument. I may not happen to agree with him, but just as it was wrong—

Mr. Deputy Speaker (Sir Paul Dean): Order. The hon. Gentleman has raised this point of order before. He knows that it is at the discretion of the hon. Member who has the floor to decide whether to give way.

Mr. Hume: What is the alternative to the process of reconciliation and the breaking down of barriers? Why should anybody be afraid of the process of reconciliation? Anybody who is afraid has no confidence in himself or herself. It means that they cannot engage in a process of reconciliation. If they cannot retain mutual respect for their own position as well as for that of somebody else, they have no self-confidence. Therefore, they should not be representatives of the people of Northern Ireland. The only alternative is the old one of hopelessness, tit-for-tat, revenge—the old doctrine of an eye for an eye which has left everybody blind in Northern Ireland.

This is well summed up by a better poet than Kipling, the good, honest voice of the North, Louis MacNeice. Describing the old hopelessness, which is what we are being offered by those who will not take this opportunity, he said:

"Why should I want to go back
To you, Ireland, my Ireland?
The blots on the page are so black
That they cannot be covered with shamrock

I hate your grandiose airs,
Your sob-stuff, your laugh and your swagger,
Your assumption that everyone cares
Who is the king of your castle.
Castles are out of date,
The tide flows round the children's sandy fancy,
Put up what flag you like, it is too late
To save your soul with bunting."

It is far too late for the people of Northern Ireland to save their souls with bunting or with flag waving. We should note that the followers of those who wave flags as though they were the upholders of the standards of those flags paint their colours on kerbstones for people to walk over. In other words, there is no leadership and no integrity in that approach and no respect. The alternative that we are offered is an opportunity which, like others, may fail. It poses great challenges and risks. The challenges are daunting and difficult, but the choices are not. There is no other choice. There is no other road.

6.28 pm

Mr. Adam Butler (Bosworth): I do not have in my voice today the power of the hon. Member for Belfast, East (Mr. Robinson), but I hope that I can emulate my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne (Mr. Gow). Even if I speak quietly, I hope that I can speak as much sense as he did. So far there have been three contributions from those who represent different parties in Northern Ireland. They make me believe that I was right the other night to vote for the televising of the proceedings of this Chamber. If the television cameras had been here, the viewers, whether in Northern Ireland or in the remainder of the United Kingdom, would have obtained a much better appreciation of the problem and of the advocates of the various points of view.

I served as a Northern Ireland Minister for nearly four years. Since then I have had the opportunity for reflection. Perhaps my views are now a little more objective than they were then. Whatever my right hon. Friend the Member for Waveney (Mr. Prior) said, although there was mistrust of English Ministers when we first appeared, I hope that I and my colleagues and friends who served with me in Northern Ireland left the impression that we were seeking to do our bit and to make our contribution to the resolution of the problems of Northern Ireland. I know that my right hon. Friend did that.

I have already expressed my view, on the occasion of the statement made by my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister last week. It is one of general welcome for the agreement. However, I cannot say that I like it, or necessarily welcome one of its fundamental points. Why should I, as a British citizen, automatically like and welcome the fact that advice can come from a Minister of a Government of a foreign state. That is the technical position of the Republic of Ireland, whatever history tells us.

However, I accept the agreement, for a reason that lies in what the hon. Member for Foyle (Mr. Hume) said. This is where I fall out with my hon. Friend the Member for Eastbourne and others who have spoken. This point is probably the fundamental point at issue in the Northern Ireland problem. Are we talking about a democratic system, or part of a democratic system, where a simple majority should sway, regardless, where first-past-the-post should rule and 50 per cent. plus should win the day? If so, life would be easy, but Stormont tried that for 50 years.

I believe the reason to be that stated by the hon. Member for Foyle, and that is the difference within Northern Ireland between the two communities. There is a division now that has been made worse by recent history. I do not need to lecture hon. Members about the position in Northern Ireland. However, one has to recognise certain basic facts. Two thirds, or less now, of the population are fundamentally unionists and loyalists, looking to London and Westminster, while the remainder of the population, on the whole, are nationalists, some republicans and nearly all Roman Catholic with a distinctive regard for the South and the Republic. It is with that that we have to concern ourselves, and that is what the agreement seeks to recognise.

It is no good saying to the people in the minority that, as they are in a minority in part of the United Kingdom, they must think like us, become totally British and prefer the Union flag, not the tricolour. Those people found themselves, because of a stroke of history, north of the border, thanks to the Boundary Commission of that time.

Mr. Harold McCusker (Upper Bann): If the right hon. Gentleman believes that a simple majority rule is not appropriate in Northern Ireland — I can understand arguments along those lines — why should I accept, through article 1 of the agreement, that a simple majority should take me out of my citizenship of the United Kingdom and into a united Ireland?

Mr. Butler: That point is somewhere among my notes to be dealt with later. If, by some magic, there were a 51 per cent. majority today, the position would be just as bad in terms of divided communities. The fact is that a majority in favour of leaving the United Kingdom — if such a situation should ever arise — is many years away. It is important to grasp this point because it is no good the Republic of Ireland saying that it has only to wait a little while longer, or for the minority in Northern Ireland to say that it has only to wait for a little while. It must be the greatest consolation to the unionist population that it is a question not of a few years but of many decades, if at all. Therefore, the imperative is on both sides to get together to work out their future.

Mr. Nicholas Budgen (Wolverhampton, South-West): Is not the advice of the Northern Ireland Office to all those who visit Northern Ireland that demographic changes within Northern Ireland will lead, perhaps within the next 20 years, to the nationalist population becoming the majority? Has that not been said? [Interruption.]

Mr. Butler: I am reinforced in what I believe — that there are no such official forecasts — by the remarks of other of my hon. Friends. There are those who see a trend that will lead that way, but I re-emphasise the point that nobody as far as I am aware, believes that a simple adverse majority — now I am a unionist — could arise within several decades, if at all.

In looking at the options that should be considered, I have in the past taken seriously the possibility of repartition, because that is the only other option if the two communities will not resolve the problems themselves. Frankly, it is not an option. Anybody who knows the demographic map of Northern Ireland knows that in every square mile of every part of the Province there is a significant minority population. The hon. Member for Fermanagh and South Tyrone (Mr. Maginnis) would

took place during the mining dispute, was not a crime? Will she condemn that disgraceful statement as an appalling example to our young people?

The Prime Minister: My hon. Friend will understand when I say that that is a matter for the courts, not for the Government. What Opposition Members say about it must be judged by the British people rather than by the Government.

Q7. **Mr. James Hamilton** asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer the hon. Gentleman to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Hamilton: May I jolt the Prime Minister's conscience about the disastrous effects that her monetarist policies are having in Scotland and, in particular, in Lanarkshire? Is she aware that Scotland's steel industry is in a dreadful state and that there are to be 200 more redundancies at the Clydesdale works in my constituency? The men are already working short time, and those redundancies will add considerably to unemployment in Scotland. What does the right hon. Lady intend to do about it?

The Prime Minister: From the CBI survey and the figures, the hon. Gentleman will know that this year output is up for the fifth consecutive year. The hon. Gentleman will be aware that production capacity greatly exceeds orders for steel. There is no way in which we can continue to keep everything open in such circumstances. The previous Labour Government had to close some things, but held up many closures which should have taken place. This Government allocated £130 million in order to purchase quota to keep Ravenscraig open. That was this Government's earnest of good faith in the future of Ravenscraig.

Mr. Peter Bruinvels asked the Prime Minister if she will list her official engagements for Tuesday 26 November.

The Prime Minister: I refer my hon. Friend to the reply that I gave some moments ago.

Mr. Bruinvels: As the Prime Minister of a country that abhors terrorism and all that it stands for, will my right hon. Friend explain why the Tanzanian terrorists who came to Stansted have been given an amnesty and are to be allowed to stay in this country for a year when they have served their terms of imprisonment?

Because of terrorist activity, is it possible to prevent airlines flying to Greece, where arms have been taken on to planes at Athens airport?

The Prime Minister: We must await the inquiry into the events at Athens airport before determining precisely where the fault lies and reaching any conclusion.

On my hon. Friend's point about the Tanzanian hijack in this country in 1982, those involved were tried in our courts, found guilty and given considerable prison

sentences. Some of them are now out of prison. An undertaking given at the time has been interpreted as our saying that the terrorists would not be returned to Tanzania. They have been refused asylum in this country, but will be allowed to stay for 12 months.

Mr. McWilliam: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. During Question Time, I asked the Minister of State for Defence Procurement what assurances he had given Dennis Ferranti about the purchase of CNC lathes to manufacture mortar shells currently made by the royal ordnance factory on Tyneside. The Minister replied—

Mr. Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order for me. I cannot be responsible for what a Minister says.

Mr. McWilliam: Further to that point of order, Mr. Speaker. I am not asking you to be responsible for what the Minister said, but to rule whether it is in order for anyone to mislead the House. The Minister said—

Mr. Speaker: Order. This is an extension of Question Time. There is a major debate ahead of us. I cannot be responsible for answers given from the Front Benches, any more than I can be responsible for the questions asked.

Mr. Dickens: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker. You will recall that during Question Time the shadow Secretary of State for Defence made a statement to the House—

Mr. Speaker: Order. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. Dickens: If I am upsetting you, Mr. Speaker, I will let it go.

Mr. McWilliam: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker.

Mr. Speaker: I must tell the hon. Gentleman that I cannot deal with his point of order because the matter that he raises is not my responsibility. What is the point of order for me?

Mr. McWilliam: Is it in order for an hon. Member to ask another hon. Member to write to him about a subject on which he has already written to him and to which he has already replied?

Mr. Speaker: I think that the answer is yes.

STATUTORY INSTRUMENTS, &c.

Ordered,

That the draft Betting, Gaming and Lotteries Act 1963 (Schedule 4) (Amendment) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Supplementary Benefit (Resources) Amendment (No. 3) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Agricultural Holdings (Fee) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the Agricultural Holdings Act 1948 (Variation of Fourth Schedule) Order 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.

That the draft Asbestos Products (Safety) Regulations 1985 be referred to a Standing Committee on Statutory Instruments, &c.—[*Mr. Biffen.*]

Anglo-Irish Agreement

~~Mr. Speaker:~~ We now come to the important debate on the Anglo-Irish agreement. I have not selected either of the amendments on the Order Paper.

3.33 pm

The Prime Minister (Mrs. Margaret Thatcher): I beg to move,

That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.

Since 1969, nearly 2,500 people have lost their lives in Northern Ireland as a result of terrorism, more than 750 of them members of the security forces. As the House is only too well aware, there has also been further loss of life among the armed forces, police and civilians in the remainder of the United Kingdom, including three of our colleagues in this House.

That is the stark background to today's debate and it takes us immediately to the historic divisions between the two communities in Northern Ireland, which we cannot ignore.

Whatever the differences that may emerge in our debate, I believe that we shall all be united in our determination to end the violence and to bring to justice those who are guilty. We shall all be united in our deep sympathy for the thousands of families whose lives have been darkened by the shadow of the gunman and the bomber; and we shall all be united in our admiration and gratitude for the men and women of the security forces in Northern Ireland and, indeed, from all parts of Great Britain, so many of whom have paid the price of protecting us with their own lives.

But it is apparent that any initiative, however modest, to bring the people of Northern Ireland closer together to beat the terrorists raises emotions and fears rooted deep in the past. I understand those fears, although I do not believe them to be justified.

Faced with all that we have seen in the past 16 years, it was not enough for the Government to rely solely upon the security forces, valiant though they are, to contain and resist the tide of violence. Let me make it clear that there can be no such thing as an acceptable level of violence, whether in Northern Ireland or elsewhere in the United Kingdom. The Government owe a duty to the security forces and to all the law-abiding people of Northern Ireland, Protestant and Catholic alike, to do everything within their power to stamp out terrorism — not by giving in to the terrorist, not by giving him a single inch. Indeed, the fact that the terrorists have condemned the agreement is a demonstration that we have done no such thing.

The fight against terrorism is greatly weakened if the community is divided against itself, and it is greatly strengthened if all people committed to democracy and the rule of law can join together against the men of violence. That, the Government felt, required a further attempt to reconcile the two communities in Northern Ireland.

The Unionist community, firmly loyal to the Crown and to the United Kingdom, represent a proud tradition of devotion to the Union which everyone in these islands should respect, and which this agreement does respect. They have a right to feel secure about Northern Ireland's position as part of the United Kingdom. This agreement, by reinforcing the principle of consent, should make them

feel more secure, not only today but in the future. Unionists have the assurance that neither an Irish Government, nor of course a British Government, will try to impose new constitutional arrangements upon them against their will.

The nationalist community think of themselves as Irish in terms of their identity, their social and cultural traditions and their political aspirations. The House can respect their identity too and acknowledge their aspirations, even though we may not see the prospect of their fulfilment.

The only lasting way to put an end to the violence and achieve the peace and stability in Northern Ireland is reconciliations between these two communities. That is the goal of this agreement.

I now draw the attention of the House to what I consider to be the most significant points of the agreement. The preamble sets out the commitment of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic to work for reconciliation; our utter and total rejection of violence; our recognition and respect for the separate identities in Northern Ireland; and our acceptance of the right of each to pursue its aspirations by peaceful means. These principles reflect the hopes of both communities.

Article 1 of the agreement makes it abundantly clear that there is no threat whatsoever to Unionists' heartfelt desire to remain part of the United Kingdom. It provides, in a formally binding international accord, a recognition by the Irish Government that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged as long as that is the wish of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland. It recognises also that the present wish of a majority is for no change in that status. There can be no better reply to the fears that have been expressed in the House than this explicit recognition of the legitimacy of the Unionist position.

Article 2 of the agreement acknowledges in a practical and strictly defined way the concern that the Irish Republic has with matters relating to Northern Ireland. In the past, that concern has sometimes been expressed in critical or negative terms which did not help the cause of harmony between the communities in Northern Ireland. Article 2, therefore, establishes an Intergovernmental Conference. This will have no executive authority either now or in the future. It will consider on a regular basis political, security and legal matters, including the administration of justice, as well as cross-border co-operation on security, economic and cultural matters.

This co-operation will not be a one-way street. The Irish Government will be able to put forward views and proposals on certain matters affecting Northern Ireland. We for our part shall be able to pursue issues of concern to all peace-loving people in Northern Ireland. Notably co-operation in the fight against Terrorism — co-operation which goes beyond the borders of Northern Ireland. The matters within the scope of the conference are spelled out in greater detail in articles 4 to 9 of the agreement. I should like to draw the House's attention to three particular points about these articles. First, if devolution is restored, those matters that become the responsibility of the devolved Government will no longer be within the purview of the intergovernmental conference. We hope that the agreement will encourage the constitutional representatives of both communities to come together to form a local administration acceptable to both. This hope has been specifically endorsed by the Irish Government. My right hon. Friend the Secretary of State for Northern

Ireland will be exploring with the constitutional parties how best to make progress. Meantime, the Assembly continues in being, with all its statutory responsibilities.

Secondly, article 8, which deals with legal matters, says that consideration will be given to the possibility of establishing mixed courts. Let me say straightaway that we have absolute confidence in the judiciary in Northern Ireland. Indeed, the integrity and courage which they have shown in recent years in maintaining high standards of judicial impartiality have been outstanding.

We know the difficulties which would be involved in mixed courts both in Northern Ireland and in the republic. We recognise the reservations which are held by the legal profession. We see no easy or early way through these difficulties. That is why, although we are prepared to consider in good faith the possibility of them at some future time, we have made it clear that we are under no commitment to introduce them.

Thirdly, I draw the House's attention to the proposals for improved security co-operation in article 9. This provides for a programme of work to be undertaken by the Chief Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary and the Commissioner of the Garda to improve co-operation in such matters as threat assessment, exchange of information, technical co-operation, training of personnel and operational resources.

The really vital element in this programme is fuller and faster exchange of information, especially pre-emptive intelligence which helps to prevent acts of terrorism.

These are specific measures which I believe will lead to real improvements in security—improvements which will be welcome above all to those men and women who live in the border areas and who have been subjected to so many merciless attacks designed to drive them from their homes and farms.

That improvement should be further reinforced by the Irish Government's intention to accede to the European convention on the suppression of terrorism.

The convention's purpose is to ensure that those who commit terrorist offences should be brought to justice and that any offences involving the use of explosives or firearms should not be regarded as political.

Irish accession should greatly increase our prospects of securing extradition from the republic of persons accused or convicted of terrorist crimes. This will be a major and a welcome step forward in the war against terrorism.

I draw the House's attention to the reference in article 12 to the possible establishment of an Anglo-Irish interparliamentary body. Both we and the Irish Government felt that this was a matter for our Parliaments themselves rather than for Governments to pursue. I hope that contacts will be established through the usual channels to consider how discussions on an interparliamentary body can most effectively be taken forward.

I have tried to explain to the House the most significant points of the agreement. In view of some of the mistaken claims about it, I want also to say something about what is not in the agreement. The agreement does not affect the status of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom. It does not set us on some imagined slippery slope to Irish unity, and it is nonsense to claim that it might.

The effect of article 1 is to confirm the provision in section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act 1973 that Northern Ireland remains part of the United Kingdom as long as a majority there so wish. That again is a

recognition of reality. The guarantee for the majority lies in the fact that it is a majority. That fundamental point is reinforced by this agreement.

Mr. Eric S. Heffer (Liverpool, Walton): I have listened carefully to the right hon. Lady. Can she explain why the Irish Government signed the agreement?

The Prime Minister: I believe that the Irish Government signed the agreement because they share with us its objectives: to try to defeat the men of violence and to try to achieve peace and stability for all the people who live, and who will continue to live, in Northern Ireland. If the hon. Gentleman wishes to read it, all of this is set out fully in the preamble to the agreement.

Second, I want to make it clear that the agreement does not detract from British sovereignty in Northern Ireland—or, for that matter, from Irish sovereignty in the republic. We, the United Kingdom Government, accountable to Parliament, remain responsible for the government of Northern Ireland. Yes, we will listen to the views of the Irish Government. Yes, we will make determined efforts to resolve differences. But at the end of the day decisions north of the border will continue to be made by the United Kingdom Government and south of the border by the Irish Government. This is a fundamental point. There can be no misunderstanding.

Third, I want to dispel the absurd notion that the Government will listen to the views of the republic on Northern Ireland matters, but not to the views of our own unionist community.

There are already many ways in which the majority community in Northern Ireland can and do put their views to the Government. The right hon. and hon. Members of this House who represent the unionist parties are themselves an important channel. Another is the Northern Ireland Assembly, an important and experienced body which could be used to improve the arrangements for consultation. Yet another is the many representations that unionists make to Ministers. The unionist voice is clearly heard and will continue to be heard.

If the Anglo-Irish agreement is to bring about a real improvement in the daily lives of the two communities in Northern Ireland, it must be matched by a determined effort on the part of all law-abiding citizens to defeat the men of violence. And that effort must rest on clear and consistent principles of justice, equity and fairness. For if democracy is the rule of the majority, the other side of the coin is fairness and respect for the minority, for all are citizens of the United Kingdom.

On the economic front, we will continue to pay special attention to Northern Ireland's needs. During direct rule, spending on economic and social programmes has risen since 1972-73 by 50 per cent. in real terms to £3,600 million last year. That amounts to nearly £2,500 a head, far more than in any other part of the United Kingdom. Spending on that scale shows the high priority given by successive Governments to the needs of Northern Ireland and its people. Our concern will continue.

On security, our efforts will also continue. Thanks to the magnificent work of our policemen and soldiers, we have already made some progress, but we still have much to do. I believe that our security forces can take new heart from the promise of greater security co-operation that will flow from the agreement.

In commending this agreement to the House, I should like first to pay tribute to Dr. Fitzgerald, who has worked

[The Prime Minister]

honestly and sincerely for an agreement to bring reassurance to both communities and a real prospect of peace and stability.

Second, I say to the members of both communities in Northern Ireland that, if Parliament approves the agreement, the Government will steadfastly implement it. This House represents all the people of the United Kingdom and its decisions are binding on all of them. We shall not give way to threats or to violence from any quarter. We shall look to the co-operation of all men and women of goodwill who want a better future for Northern Ireland and for their families.

Mr. Michael McNair-Wilson (Newbury): Before my right hon. Friend leaves the point about the accountability of Parliament, will she say whether there will be any opportunity for Parliament to know about the deliberations of the Anglo-Irish conference? Will its deliberations be made public anywhere, or debated?

The Prime Minister: It is not expected that everything that is said in the intergovernmental conference will be made public. I am giving consideration to how we can report to the House, for obvious reasons. We attend many intergovernmental conferences in Europe and elsewhere and usually report to the House about those that we attend. I am giving urgent consideration to this matter because I realise that there is concern about it.

Finally, I address myself once more to those among the unionist community who have openly expressed their fears and worries about this agreement. Far from representing any threat to the union of Northern Ireland within the United Kingdom, the agreement reinforces the union, and that should bring reassurance and confidence to the unionist majority. It clearly recognises—as it should—the validity of their great tradition, and it holds out the prospect of greater success in the struggle against terrorism from which the majority have suffered so much. As one who believes in the union, I urge the unionists to take advantage of the chance offered by the agreement.

We embarked on this agreement because we were not prepared to see the two communities for ever locked into the tragedies and antagonisms of the past. The younger generation, above all, has a right to expect more than that. The price of new hope is persistent endeavour. That is what we ask, and ask equally of all.

3.52 pm

Mr. Neil Kinnock (Islwyn): Today, as at all times when we discuss the affairs of Northern Ireland both inside and outside the House, we do so against a background of tragedy and atrocity. We think of those who have lost their lives, as the Prime Minister said, and we think of their loved ones and those whose lives have been devastated by sectarian killings and attacks. We remember those families who, when they felt the forces of violence, no matter what the status of those killed—soldiers, policemen, adults, relations or children—have always ended with a despairing question—“Why did it happen to us?” Many hon. Members have heard that question from grieving relations much too often, and, tragically those who represent Northern Ireland seats have heard it more often than the rest of us.

As we debate the accord, we remember too the courage and the fortitude of those who have lived and worked with

and within the tortured community of Northern Ireland. We know that the problem of Northern Ireland, plainly, has spilled across the water and scarred Britain. We acknowledge the debt that we owe, both on the mainland and in Northern Ireland, to the civil servants, the police, Members of the House and so many ordinary men and women in Northern Ireland who have been willing to help in the search for peace and a way out of the sterile sectarian divisions.

As we think of these things, we have to remind ourselves yet again that there are matters other than security that are of importance to the people of Northern Ireland, and that there are issues worthy of report and debate other than the constant plague of conflict.

We are sometimes told that there is no solution to the historic problems of Northern Ireland, but, however difficult it may be, and however long it may take, we must never give up the search for a solution. That would be defeatism paid for in blood. If we give up the search for peace, we say to the people of Northern Ireland, “Your agony must endure for ever”. In all conscience, we cannot and must not do that.

This House has a special duty to recall that the problems of Northern Ireland are a matter not just for the Province or for the Republic but, most definitely, for Britain as well. In addition to the tragedies and their irreparable costs, there is the price of conflict which the New Ireland Forum research team has reasonably estimated to be over £9,000 million between 1969 and 1982 and a further £1,500 million or so a year with the addition of the £120 million or so a year that we spend out of public coffers in maintaining the armed forces in Northern Ireland. It is not fitting for this House remorselessly to consign such sums to Northern Ireland without at least being able to demonstrate to the people of Wales, Scotland and England that we deliberately pursue all means of achieving an end to the conflict and the massive costs that go with it.

We must also recognise that many of the legislative and other changes that have come about as a result of our inability to find a political solution in Northern Ireland disfigure the democracy of our entire country. Courts without juries, strip searches in prisons, internment without trial and many other things can be said to have arisen from the circumstances of their time, but no democracy can or should bear such changes lightly or for long, because if it does it puts at risk the very liberty that it seeks to defend.

For all those reasons, the Opposition will do whatever they can to promote the chances of peace, and the prosperity that depends on that peace, in Northern Ireland.

The status quo offers absolutely no solution to anyone at all. For that reason we shall approve the Anglo-Irish agreement, which for reasons of accuracy and not affectation I wish had been called the British-Irish agreement.

The agreement is clearly a development from the New Ireland Forum set up in Dublin in 1983. That was a bold and visionary step taken by the major political parties in the Republic, together with the Social Democratic and Labour party. I pay tribute to those parties and their leaders, one of whom we are fortunate enough to have in this House. None of those leaders has given up his legitimate commitment to constitutional nationalism or his commitment to the reunification of Ireland. They have recognised that, just as they cannot be forced to relinquish their aspirations of getting rid of the border, neither can

a somewhat tricky run I had on an Unstarred Question one night in your Lordships' House. In fact, 36 scientific posts have been lost in the Welsh plant breeding station. Losses there, and in Wales generally, have been broadly the same as in England.

Lord Stodart of Leaston: My Lords, is my noble friend aware that there is anxiety not only in Wales but also in that other great country further north, Scotland? Can he say whether his figures include what I believe is a proposed 70 per cent. cut in the establishment of the agricultural research station, which many people would say has done even more valuable work, if that is possible, than its counterpart in England?

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, I am not going to enter into battle on the relative merits between Wales and Scotland. The figures I gave were for past cuts and do not include future cuts.

Lord Mackie of Benshie: My Lords, does the noble Earl not agree that if one wants to cut a service then the way to do so is not by causing such anxiety that the best people leave? Is the noble Earl further aware that the same thing is happening in the advisory services in the colleges in Scotland, as well as in research? In the case of both the north college and the east college I know of several first-class people who have left to go to other jobs.

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, my right honourable friend the Secretary of State for Education and Science accepted the advice of the Advisory Board for the Research Councils in 1982 that scientific priorities required a shift of funds towards work in areas such as information technology. That shift could be accomplished only by reducing the funds going to the AFRC from the science budget. I am sure that the noble Lord, Lord Mackie of Benshie, is right when he speaks about Scotland. I certainly would not argue with him on that matter.

The Earl of Halsbury: My Lords, is the noble Earl in a position to help the House to discriminate between job losses from the agricultural research front and job redistribution within the agricultural research front—that is, redistribution between the public and the private sectors?

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, I think I shall have to write to the noble Earl, Lord Halsbury, with that information.

Lord John-Mackie: My Lords, the noble Earl is very cagey about figures. Is he aware that the Institute of Professional Civil Servants, looking at the matter over a long period, is emphatic that there will be a 20 per cent. loss of scientists from the service? That is quite alarming. The noble Earl should take seriously what many of his noble friends obviously think of the situation and look into it more than he obviously has done.

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, I do not think I was being at all cagey. I have not only said that there were 700 staff involved but have broken down how that figure of 700 arose. I do not know how I could be less cagey.

Lord Elwyn-Jones: My Lords, will not the Government's proposals to charge farmers for the advisory services that they need aggravate the situation and the difficulties for farmers, and not only in West Wales?

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, I think that is rather a different question.

Baroness Nicol: My Lords, will the Minister accept that the reply he gave to the noble Earl, Lord Halsbury, could be amplified a little? What matters is the destruction of a team. The fact that the people involved are distributed among the private sector does not help matters. Does the Minister not appreciate that it is the destruction of a particular team that is so devastating to the plant breeding institute in particular?

The Earl of Swinton: Yes, my Lords; and, of course, when any Minister says during Question Time that he will write to a noble Lord, a copy of that reply is put into the Library for all those interested to see.

Lord Mackie of Benshie: My Lords, is the noble Earl aware that, while we deplore cuts in the establishment for agricultural advice and research, we greatly admire his personal efforts in the cutting of capacity?

The Earl of Swinton: My Lords, I think that is one area in which I can share a great achievement with the noble Lord who asked that question.

Personal Bills: Select Committee

3.7 p.m.

The Chairman of Committees (Lord Aberdare): My Lords, I beg to move the first Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Moved, That a Select Committee on Personal Bills be appointed, to which all Petitions for Personal Bills shall stand referred; and that, as proposed by the Committee of Selection, the Lords following, with the Chairman of Committees, be named of the Committee:—

| | |
|---------------------------|-----------------|
| Banks, L. | Templeman, L. |
| Dilhorne, V. | Wilberforce, L. |
| Murton of Lindisfarne, L. | Willis, L. |

—(Lord Aberdare.)

On Question, Motion agreed to.

Leave of Absence and Lords' Expenses: Select Committee

Lord Aberdare: My Lords, I beg to move the second Motion standing in my name on the Order Paper.

Moved, That a Select Committee be appointed for the general supervision of arrangements relating to leave of absence and the reimbursement of Lords' expenses; and that, as proposed by the Committee of Selection, the Lords following, with the Chairman of Committees, be named of the Committee:—

| | |
|-------------------|---------------|
| Denham, L. | Ponsonby of |
| Hylton-Foster, B. | Shulbrede, L. |
| Kilmarnock, L. | Tordoff, L. |

—(Lord Aberdare.)

Lord Shinwell: My Lords, I am not opposing reference to a Select Committee of this very important subject of noble Lords' absences and reimbursements, but when I see the names of those who will be responsible for examining reimbursements I wonder—and I say this without any malice in my mind—what their reimbursements are. I ask this merely as a matter of enlightenment.

The situation is this, if I may be allowed to put it to your Lordships. A vast number of Members of this House do not attend, for one reason or another. There are various reasons why they cannot attend possibly complaints or illness or they have other work to do. After all, there is a great deal of voluntary work done outside this House by your Lordships. In those circumstances unless they attend they cannot claim for expenses incurred by them in the way of correspondence, transport, interviews, and research for information all over the place. Those are some of the activities that every Member of your Lordships' House has to undertake at one time or another.

In those circumstances, if I may put it in this fashion, these gentlemen—noble Lords, I should say, but I do not withdraw the term "gentlemen"—should take into account what I have just said. They should take into account the variety of activities which are undertaken by Members of your Lordships' House, apart from attendance, and pay them accordingly.

Lord Aberdare: My Lords, the committee actually has no particular powers in respect of the rules that exist for the claiming of expenses. It is appointed mainly to deal with individual claimants and difficulties that arise under the regulations as they exist. I am afraid that most of the suggestions made by the noble Lord would not be appropriate for this particular committee.

On Question, Motion agreed to.

European Communities (Spanish and Portuguese Accession) Bill [H.L.]

Read a third time, and passed, and sent to the Commons.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement

3.9 p.m.

The Lord President of the Council (Viscount Whitelaw) rose to move, That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.

The noble Viscount said: My Lords, it is fatally easy for those who have had responsibility in Northern Ireland to live in the past rather than face the future. Today I intend to avoid that danger. But I cannot escape two personal reflections which are relevant to our consideration of this new Anglo-Irish Agreement.

The first is that, contrary to the unfortunate impression given by some politicians in the Province, there are many people there who only want to live in peace with their neighbours and to carry on a normal

life in the beautiful country which is their home. Amidst all the trouble and difficulties no one should forget these friendly and warm-hearted people to whom we in the rest of the United Kingdom owe our understanding and help as their fellow citizens.

Secondly, it has become so dangerously easy to destroy, and equally so immensely difficult to construct, plans to end the conditions of violence and intimidation which lead to despair that the temptation just to keep going on becomes almost irresistible.

Yet no one here, in Northern Ireland, or outside, should be under any illusion. The *status quo* is not an acceptable option. No one in your Lordships' House needs reminding of the terrible toll taken by violence in Northern Ireland over the years, the appalling loss of life of young soldiers, policemen and civilians, the damage to property and the disruption of community and commercial life. Nor can we forget the tragedy and anxiety felt by families throughout the United Kingdom from events in Northern Ireland and, indeed, here also on the mainland. Surely, we all share responsibility to do all in our power to isolate and defeat the men of violence.

I am therefore seeking the approval of this House to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which I believe marks a useful step in Anglo-Irish relations. It offers a substantial opportunity, a chance to build, to the people of Northern Ireland, both Unionist and Nationalist. It can contribute significantly to the aim, which we all share, of peace, stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland.

I want first to stress that it is not the agreement some have made it out to be. It is not "joint authority" by some other name; it does not give the Republic of Ireland a veto over the exercise of our powers and responsibilities in Northern Ireland; and, above all, it does not derogate from our sovereignty.

But neither is it, as some have argued, an agreement which will change nothing. Of course, it will not solve all Northern Ireland's problems. But we hope that it will change things in Northern Ireland, in a measured and responsible way, in the direction in which successive governments have wished to go.

Underlying the agreement is recognition by the two governments of the differing aspirations and cultures of the two communities in Northern Ireland. This is essential. Each of the two must be able to feel secure in its own identity and tolerant of the other's. The agreement offers important safeguards to both.

The majority in Northern Ireland wish to retain the link with Great Britain. We have never wavered from the position that a change in the status of Northern Ireland could come about only with the consent of a majority there. The present wish of a majority is against change.

Both governments accept all this and have affirmed it in a binding international agreement. There are no ambiguities; I do implore people who think that there may be to look at what the agreement actually says on this. It says that there will be no derogation from the sovereignty of the United Kingdom Government; responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland remains with United Kingdom Ministers accountable to Parliament.

Thus it is that Her Majesty's Government are seeking the approval of this House, and of another place, to an agreement which affirms the commitment of both governments to the principle of majority consent. It is entirely consistent with that commitment for us also to say, as we have done, that, if at some future date a majority of the people in Northern Ireland were to consent formally to a united Ireland, the government would introduce and support in Parliament legislation to that effect.

Contrary to what some may say and feel, that should give no cause for misapprehension or uncertainty among Unionists. Their loyalty is, absolutely properly, to the Crown in Parliament. Only by an Act of the Crown in Parliament could the status of Northern Ireland be changed. That position is not altered by the agreement, and I earnestly hope that all sections of the community will remember that in our system of parliamentary democracy the decisions of Parliament are binding and must be respected.

As well as reassurance for the majority, we also believe that we cannot make progress towards reconciliation in Northern Ireland unless we can also reflect, understand and take account of the minority viewpoint. We need to create conditions which will provide the minority with the confidence that they have a role to play in the affairs of Northern Ireland. It is here that the Irish Government have a vital contribution to make. Of course, they already raise with us many questions about events in Northern Ireland, particularly where they affect the minority community. What the agreement will do is to formalise this procedure so that the Irish Government's views and proposals can be taken into account in a more structured and methodical way.

I shall now explain briefly how the agreement sets out to achieve this. It provides in Article 2 for the establishment of an intergovernmental conference. This will extend and build upon the framework of the existing Anglo-Irish Inter-governmental Council. The conference will serve as a framework within which—I quote from the agreement itself—

“the United Kingdom Government and the Irish Government work together;

- (i) for the accommodation of the rights and identities of the two traditions which exist in Northern Ireland; and
- (ii) for peace, stability and prosperity throughout the island of Ireland by promoting reconciliation, respect for human rights, co-operation against terrorism and the development of economic, social and cultural co-operation”.

The conference will deal on a regular basis with matters relating mainly to Northern Ireland—on political issues, security and related matters, legal matters including the administration of justice and the promotion of cross-border co-operation. We are committed to consider carefully these views and to make determined efforts to resolve any differences. That means neither that we are obliged to accept the suggestions that are put to us by the Irish, nor that the Irish are granted a veto. It means simply that we will try our hardest to reach agreement. But we are realists. It will remain the clear responsibility of the British Government to take final decisions.

We welcome this arrangement on two accounts. First, it will enable the Government better to take account of the minority views. It creates conditions

whereby the minority community can be confident that they have a vital role to play in the affairs of Northern Ireland; and we hope too that it will increase their confidence in the institutions of Northern Ireland.

Secondly, we welcome it because it provides a new framework for more effective co-operation in a wide range of economic, social, cultural and security matters. Our foremost priority in Northern Ireland must be the complete eradication of terrorism which has menaced both Northern Ireland and the Republic, and indeed the mainland of the United Kingdom for many years. This requires the closest co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Irish Governments as spelt out in Article 9 of the agreement.

We therefore very much welcome the Irish Government's commitment in the agreement to work with us to ensure that those who adopt or support violence do not succeed. We hope to make early progress against terrorism which is to the benefit of all the people of Northern Ireland. We look forward to tackling this problem with the Irish; for the conference will help us to raise matters of concern too, such as the improvement of cross-border security. We also welcome the Irish Government's intention announced in the communique to accede as soon as possible to the European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism.

The confidence of all law-abiding citizens in the security forces and the courts is essential if they are to be wholly effective in upholding the law and in dealing with terrorism. The security forces in Northern Ireland are already highly esteemed throughout the United Kingdom for their dedication, bravery and professionalism, and I should like to take this opportunity of paying a special tribute to them.

Noble Lords: Hear, hear!

Viscount Whitelaw: My Lords, I should add also no less a tribute to the judiciary who have maintained the highest standards of impartiality and integrity of which we are proud. But we must never relax our efforts to secure the support of all sections of the community, including the minority, for the security forces and for the judicial system in Northern Ireland. Relations between the security forces and the minority, cross-border security co-operation and public confidence in the administration of justice are issues which will be for the intergovernmental conference to consider.

Article 8 also mentions, as one possible approach, the idea of mixed courts. We have made it clear, and I shall repeat now, that we cannot see any easy or early way round the very considerable difficulties in the way of that particular proposal. We have undertaken to consider this possibility entirely without commitment.

Let me now say something about the response to the agreement. It is clear that responsible opinion from many parts of the political spectrum accepts that the agreement is a constructive approach to the problems of Northern Ireland and offers hope of tackling the violence. I am one of those perhaps who can say with all honesty that I very well understand the anxieties and fears expressed from among the Unionist majority

[VISCOUNT WHITELAW.]

of the community in Northern Ireland itself. However, I believe these fears are not well-founded.

It is claimed that the agreement is unprecedented; and that it is in itself a breach of sovereignty. But there is nothing unprecedented, nor any breach of sovereignty, when neighbouring states set up machinery to work together for common security and well-being. How can there be a breach of sovereignty when the final decisions rest with us, as they must and will? I very much hope that as time goes on more and more people will see the agreement in its proper perspective and that it is well worth the effort to make it work. Of course this will be difficult, but only in that way can progress be made towards peace, stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland. I hope those Unionists who are (in my judgment, understandably) voicing their grave doubts will carefully consider this aspect.

The arrangements set out in the agreement do not represent an alternative to the search for devolution: indeed the agreement reaffirms both governments' commitment to find an acceptable form of devolved administration in Northern Ireland—and that means one which would secure widespread acceptance throughout the community. We want the people of Northern Ireland to take over responsibility for the every-day decisions which affect their lives, but there needs to be agreement across the community.

Both governments, however, recognise that devolution can be achieved only with the co-operation of constitutional representatives within Northern Ireland of both traditions there. We hope that the agreement will encourage the elected representatives of both communities to come together to discuss arrangements for forming a devolved structure acceptable to both. And should a devolved administration be established, the intergovernmental conference would cease to consider any matters which would become the responsibility of a new local administration.

No single agreement will solve all of Northern Ireland's problems. I know from firsthand experience the complexities of the situation in Northern Ireland, the depth of divisions and the magnitude of the task in trying to reach a solution. I have learnt the hard way through experience that progress can only be made slowly, one step at a time. I firmly believe that this agreement offers an important step in the right direction—it offers a real opportunity to make progress towards reconciliation between the two communities in Northern Ireland and to tackle cross-border terrorism in a determined way. It contains reassurances for both communities that their rights will be safeguarded. It will create an improved climate of friendship and co-operation between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. It is thus in the interests of all the people of Northern Ireland that we do not let this opportunity pass. The people within the rest of the United Kingdom will certainly expect them to work constructively for its success.

That is the reality of the circumstances in which we find ourselves and the circumstances in which we as a Government thought it right to seek an agreement of this kind. We did so in the full understanding that it would not, and could not, produce a solution at a

stroke. No agreement could do that. What it does offer—and I very firmly believe this—is the chance to make progress in a situation where for some years progress has not seemed possible.

My Lords, I commend the Motion to this House.

Moved, That this House approves the Anglo-Irish Agreement (Cmnd. 9657) signed on 15th November by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Dr. Garret FitzGerald.—(*Viscount Whitelaw.*)

3.30 p.m.

Lord Cledwyn of Penrhos: My Lords, we are grateful to the noble Viscount the Leader of the House for the speech with which he has opened this very important debate. The noble Viscount has at least two qualifications to speak in this debate and to be heard with care and with respect. First, he was, as he has reminded us, for a period the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland; and, secondly, he is completely sincere, I believe, in his desire to achieve a settlement or at least the practical beginnings of a settlement of this intractable problem.

My own credentials are less obvious. I can, however, see the Wicklow Mountains from my home on a clear day, and the nearest city to us is Dublin, 60 miles away; so that I know Ireland very well. It would be easier for me, logistically at least, to be a Member of the Dail than a Member of this Parliament! I have also known the leaders of Ireland, north and south, including Mr. de Valera, with whom I discussed these problems in years past. And although he remained passionately in favour of a united Ireland, he had come to recognise the realities of the position and that there is no simple solution to the island's problem.

The history of the past 70 years demonstrates very clearly—from the Curragh mutiny and the Easter Rising to the present day—that finding a peaceful and permanent solution to the Irish problem has been and remains the most difficult continuing task in British politics. Everyone wants the problem to be resolved, but on his own terms. The failure to resolve it is costly in terms of lives, in terms of suffering and in terms of resources. It is a running sore that saps the strength of Britain and of Ireland. It gives our critics both East and West the opportunity to cast doubt upon Britain's commitment to human rights and to the freedom of the individual. The central, most important, injunction of the Christian religion is that we should love one another. That people, including ministers and priests, should invoke their religion, both Protestant and Roman Catholic, encourage violence and kill and maim each other without mercy, in its name, makes a savage mockery of Christianity.

It is against this background that we must look at this agreement. If it gives hope that it will help, even in a small way, to bring an end to this senseless and evil conflict, then I believe strongly that we must give it our support. It makes no great fundamental changes, as the noble Viscount has indicated. Indeed, like all moderate compromises, it attracts criticism from one side because it goes too far and from the other because it does not go far enough. The press over the last few days has demonstrated this. For example, the *Spectator*, over the weekend, contained three successive articles that reflected three differing and



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

26 November 1985

I enclose a copy of a letter to the Prime Minister from Sir Eldon Griffiths, M.P., which we received very shortly before the opening of the Debate on the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

We were not keen for Sir Eldon to intervene during the Prime Minister's speech to raise his points and managed to persuade him to desist by agreeing that the Prime Minister would see a small delegation from the RUC Police Federation as he requests.

I enclose a copy of a draft reply which the Prime Minister intends to send to Sir Eldon Griffiths. It follows the line which I discussed with Robert Andrew on the telephone at the stage when it seemed likely that Sir Eldon Griffiths might raise his points in the debate.

I should be grateful to know whether you are content with the draft. It would be helpful to know by tomorrow evening.

CHARLES POWELL

Jim Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

EDMON CRIFFITHS.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

Monday
25/11/85.

Dear Margaret -

IRELAND

I shall of course support you
on Ireland but having spent much time
with the RUC (and consulted them a fresh
one the weekend), I do hope that you
and Tom will agree to meet their Police
Federation, set up by law to "represent them
on all matters affecting the welfare and
efficiency" of the Force. May I ^{please} _{have} your views on this?

There is wide and deep unease over
the Agreement, and I should like, during your
speech, to intervene with two questions that
are at the heart of the RUC's worries:

(1) Can the Government interfere
— by words or deeds if not by formal
instruction — in the way in which the police
enforce the law? and

(2) In the event, the RUC finds
itself enforcing the law, as passed in
the U.K. parliament, against the demonstrated
will of a majority in Northern Ireland (as
shown by the ballot box), will the Government
protect the wives and families, and homes, of
police officers against the retaliation they expect
from enraged members of the majority community,
as well as the IRA?

These are real outcashes. I am

doing everything I can to keep
the Federation on your side, (the side
of sanity); but it ~~is~~ would be unwise not
to recognize the degree of police activity.

Very good wish for the debate,

Wm. F. Brown

LONDON GRIFFITHS,



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

2 Nov,

Dear Michael

Northern Ireland

You may wish to see this.

I strongly back what the P.O.

is doing — but she may wish

to see this with a note of the

problems it poses for the RUC.

Henry
Griffiths

Extract from a Speech by Sir Eldon Griffiths, M.P.
to Party Workers at Nowton, Bury St. Edmunds,
8 pm. Saturday, 23rd November.



HOUSE OF COMMONS
LONDON SW1A 0AA

POLICE ANXIETIES OVER THE ANGLO IRISH AGREEMENT

No group has more to gain than the Royal Ulster Constabulary - who have taken the casualties - from any turning down of the graph of violence in Northern Ireland. But none has more to lose than the RUC if, as could transpire, the consequences of the Anglo Irish agreement were to include a reintroduction of political policing into Northern Ireland, and the loss of policing by consent.

The men and women of the RUC will view with dismay - and contempt - the sight of self proclaimed loyalist politicians whooping up violence against the British Government's attempts to bring peace in N. Ireland. But what happens to the concept of "policing by consent"

if the Unionists and Ian Paisley procure, via the ballot box, a demonstration that a majority of the electors of N. Ireland is opposed to the Anglo Irish agreement? The prospect of the police being asked to enforce the will of a democratic majority in Westminster against the will of a democratic majority in Ulster, to put it mildly is a daunting one. Professionally this would lay an impossible load on the police. Personally it could present individual police officers with impossible dilemmas when - as could well happen - their wives and children are ostracized and even victimized solely because their men folk are required to enforce a United Kingdom dispensation that is rejected by the local ~~country~~ community!

If "policing by consent" is put at risk by these new arrangements, so too is the concept of non-political policing. The most significant



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reform of the RUC since the bad old days of Stormont (when the police in the eyes of most Catholics too often appeared to be the arm of the Orange Order) is that the Force has now become politically independent. Its Chief Constable respects their policies, but takes no order from political ministers. Its men and women of all ranks are the servants of the Queen, not the Government; literally the limbs of the law, as distinct from the agents of politicians.

The question that now arises is whether the new Anglo Irish conference will interfere in this type of policing. The temptations, I fear, will be great.

Suppose, for example, that Ministers and civil servants from either or both sides of the border were to decide that Anglo Irish harmony would best be served by banning a parade or overlooking a crime, or not pressing some politically sensitive charges.

Would the Conference not be tempted to bring pressure on the police to apply the law in a manner that best suited its members?

Their reasons might be impeccable. But where would the duty of the policeman lie? To uphold the law and account to the Courts? Or to bend the law at the behest of his political masters?

It has always been the practice and the duty of the British police to hold the delicate balance between enforcing the law and upholding the Queen's peace. But this judgement is theirs to make, and always they must account for their decisions and their actions to the courts. Not so if politicians, no matter how worthy their reasons, interfere in police operations. Once Minister and bureaucrats start telling the police what to do, politics prevail and the rule of law is devalued. The police become the agents of whichever



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group of politicians happens to be in power.

There is nothing in ^{the} White Paper that of itself confirms that this risk of politicizing the Royal Ulster Constabulary necessarily will arise from the new Standing Conference. But the police are right to be anxious and fully entitled to look to the Prime Minister for safeguards. Vague assurances will not be enough.

If police morale is to be maintained Ministers need to demonstrate first that they understand and second that they are prepared to meet these genuine police anxieties. For without an independent and fully committed civilian police force - no agreements, however promising, can, or will, succeed.