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*Dear Ken.*

Thank you very much for your letter of 9 January, and for your good wishes for 1997. I hope that you, too, have a happy and prosperous year.

We too have been very much concerned about the recent attacks that have been ascribed to loyalists, and their implications for the position of the loyalist parties in the talks. I entirely agree that there must be no double standards: the rules must be observed scrupulously. No party must be ejected from the talks where it cannot be shown that there has been "demonstrable dishonouring" of the Mitchell Principles by it, and the rules of procedural fairness must be obeyed. Nevertheless, when something happens that casts doubt on a party's position, the issue must be addressed, and if it is shown that there has been demonstrable dishonouring, the party concerned cannot remain.

Matters have, however, moved on somewhat since you wrote. No formal representations in respect of the parties have been received. We have ourselves been clear, however, that we must pursue the implications of the recent attacks. We





have therefore met the loyalist parties, and impressed on them most clearly the public, and indeed our own, concerns. We are continuing to evaluate the position. I see that Mr McMichael on Tuesday emphasised to the media that "our parties are active in our opposition to violence", which is, I think, important in this context.

I am most grateful to you, nevertheless, for your suggestions. Although matters now stand slightly differently than when you wrote, we will continue to bear them in mind.

*Imogen  
Lally*

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