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DRAFT MINUTE FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO SEND TO THE PRIME MINISTER

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND: NEXT STEPS AFTER DRUMCREE

I attach a copy of the statement I made in the House yesterday on the events of the last ten days in Northern Ireland. I am now writing to let colleagues know how I intend to proceed on the parades issue and in developing and sustaining the current Talks process.

2. I should first mention the **current security situation**. Levels of violence have fallen in recent days. There were further disturbances [overnight], but not on the same scale as during the past week. The situation remains tense but under control. The Spearhead battalion is being relocated from the Province today. It is not yet clear which organisation was responsible for the bombing of a hotel in Enniskillen at the weekend, but republicans certainly carried out the attack. The security forces remain on full alert against the possibility of a renewed PIRA campaign in Northern Ireland: the loyalist ceasefires, however, continue to hold.

3. Turning to the last few days, it may be useful briefly to recap the sequence of events at Drumcree. The Chief Constable's decision of 6 July to re-route the parade away from the Garvaghy Road stemmed from his assessment of widespread disorder if it

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continued on its original route. That operational decision reflected the realities on the ground; but as the balance of circumstances and risks changed in the next few days, with the specific threat that 60,000 to 70,000 Orangemen would converge on Drumcree Church on 11/12 July and attempt to force a passage, with the almost inevitable loss of life which that would entail, the balance clearly shifted. The Chief Constable therefore decided on the 11th that the authorisation of a limited parade was the outcome best designed to protect life. The four Church leaders made valiant attempts to mediate between the Orange Order and the Garvaghy Road residents, but they were frustrated by a degree of intransigence at local level on both sides. In the circumstances it was self-evidently right for the Chief Constable to make a further operational decision taking account of the change in circumstances.

4. I believe that, despite the Taoiseach's unhelpful comments, the message that the Chief Constable did indeed make his own operational decisions, without political pressure or direction, is increasingly getting across. It is equally clear, however, that the sequence of events last week left many throughout the community with the perception that the present system can, in extreme situations, make the decision on disputed marches conditional on the pressure of the numbers who can be mobilised on the streets to challenge operational police judgements. The dangers to public order if this misconception were to become widespread are evident. Equally, the doctrine that the police should be left to make purely operational decisions on very contentious marches such as Drumcree has arguably

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been called into question by the Chief Constable's own comments following the march about the invidious position in which he felt he and his officers had been placed.

5. I therefore believe that there is an unanswerable case for a further examination of the general handling of parades and marches, which, to carry credibility, will clearly have to be an independent enquiry. I accordingly confirmed yesterday that the Government would be establishing such a review.

6. I accordingly plan to set up an independent committee to deliberate on the general issue. This will not be designed to investigate the circumstances of individual parades, whether at Drumcree or elsewhere, or arbitrate upon them. Its function will be broader. Based on evidence which any interested party will be free to submit, I envisage that it would review the current arrangements for handling street parades and marches in Northern Ireland; and would focus in particular on the existing legal provisions, the powers and responsibilities of the Secretary of State, the police and others. It would be invited to consider whether any new machinery was necessary to help determine whether and how certain marches and parades should take place, and also the scope for a Code of Practice which all involved might observe. Naturally, I would expect it to complete its work in sufficient time for its report to be implemented and any new machinery put in place before the 1997 marching season.

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7. It will be of the greatest importance that this exercise is recognised by Nationalists as a genuine independent review of an issue which causes them deep concern, with the real potential to produce a new accommodation. Equally, the review must not be seen by Unionists as a major destabilising threat to their own identity. I believe that it will be possible to square this circle: many Nationalists accept that what Orangemen see as their "right to march" is a very important part of Unionist identity; while many senior figures in the Orange Order were seriously shaken by the events of the last week and would actively welcome a review aimed at defusing the issue for the future. (David Trimble indeed privately recommended last week that I should "provide for a speedy consideration of the Parades issue generally" as part of the compromise which the four Church leaders sought to engineer at Drumcree.) To ensure that both sides do see an independent review as an acceptable strategy to move beyond current difficulties, it will be necessary that they both feel some ownership of it; and I would therefore intend to consult them informally on the draft terms of reference before they are finalised.

8. It will of course be essential for the membership of the Review body to be of considerable stature and to bring a range of legal, public order and other skills and experience to the task. I shall discuss my proposals in this area with relevant colleagues.

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9. The events of the last few days throw into even starker relief the need for a permanent political accommodation in Northern Ireland to which all sides can assent. Without this, the brittle foundations on which life in the Province rests will continue to be exposed by marches and other divisive issues. The **current negotiations** are the way to achieve this accommodation - and the fact that we now have round-table multi-party talks making steady if unspectacular progress under the skilful chairmanship of Senator Mitchell and his colleagues is a very important positive feature which must not be obscured by the recent violence. The route to continuing real progress in the negotiations lies in constructive engagement between the UUP and the SDLP. Trimble has hitherto been cautious because of the wrecking tactics adopted by McCartney and (to a lesser extent) the DUP; and his room for manoeuvre within the last few weeks has been limited by the spectre of Drumcree. Now that that corner has been turned, with his position in the Unionist community maintained or even strengthened, I would hope and expect him to take a bolder line and face down any sniping from the other Unionist parties.

10. Before Drumcree the SDLP showed every sign of full engagement in the negotiations and a determination to secure a successful outcome, despite Sinn Fein's absence. They now feel bruised and disappointed (and it is worth remembering that Seamus Mallon, who has led their team in the negotiations, has had to contend with serious personal intimidation from loyalists over the last week). The announcement of an enquiry on the parades issue and consultation

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on its terms of reference will, I hope, start to persuade them that we recognise their concerns. A more forward posture by the UUP in the negotiations would also help point the way forward.

11. The Irish have of course made a number of extremely unhelpful comments, but I believe they are now regaining their balance and recognising the need for the two Governments to show joint commitment through the multi-party Talks to find a basis for an acceptable political settlement. The forthcoming Intergovernmental Conference which I announced yesterday will be important not only in dispelling any remaining Irish misconceptions about the Chief Constable's operational independence but also in refocusing them on the continuing effort needed in the negotiations.

12. The Government has never been under any illusion about the difficulty of building a lasting and stable political accommodation which would successfully reconcile the divisions so graphically exposed by the violence last week. But that violence has itself underlined for the great majority in the Province the need for such an accommodation.

13. Since the end of the previous set of Talks in 1992, we have been working determinedly to re-establish negotiations on a more purposive and comprehensive basis, and we have now succeeded in doing this. The key challenge in the weeks ahead will be to repair and maintain our good working relationship with the SDLP, while at the same time encouraging the UUP to move forward confidently into

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full negotiations, without constantly looking over their shoulder at the DUP and McCartney. I believe that there are good prospects of making definitive progress (even on the difficult issue of decommissioning, where the absence of Sinn Fein may make it easier to move forward). The establishment of an independent review of the handling of parades and marches will play a very important part in re-establishing confidence, not only in the negotiations but also more widely among the responsible population of the Province, who have been extremely concerned by the scenes of the last few days. I shall keep colleagues informed of developments.

14. I am copying this letter and attachment to other members of NI, to the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Scotland and the Lord Advocate, and to Sir Robin Butler.

PM

[ATTACHMENT: 15 JULY STATEMENT]

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APDL/51397

Northern Ireland

3.30 pm

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (Sir Patrick Mayhew): With permission, Madam Speaker, I will make a statement about the events of the past 10 days in Northern Ireland, and about the way forward.

Throughout that period, massive and completely unacceptable civil disorder has occurred on both sides of the community—totally wrongful in character and unjust in its consequences for all its victims. In the course of that period, two men have tragically lost their lives.

The Royal Ulster Constabulary has been stretched to the limit of its ability to maintain order and preserve life. Violent manifestations of sectarian antagonism have occurred. Intimidation, including intimidation of RUC officers and their families, has been rife. The Killyhevlin hotel at Enniskillen has been gravely damaged by a bomb, with many people shocked and injured.

All that represents, without doubt, the worst setback for many years—a return towards what so many people in Northern Ireland and far beyond had prayed was over for good. It has been a black period for Northern Ireland, with deep fears and anxieties generated on all sides. Trust and confidence have suffered greatly. In this statement, I will examine briefly with the House what has happened, and what the way forward from here now should be.

At the outset, however, I want to say three things. First, I warmly commend—as I think the whole House will—the maintenance by the loyalist paramilitary organisations of their ceasefire. It is of critical importance that it should continue. Secondly, if the people of Northern Ireland are to be helped to move back from the abyss, and move forward to a better future, all of us who claim a right to speak on these matters must seek to be objective and fair. To seize on what is no more than a partisan perception and proclaim it as an established truth without examination is immensely dangerous and damaging.

Lastly, I want to say that the scene, grave though it undoubtedly is, does have a crucially positive element. We have in place a democratic process of political talks, for which a large majority of the electorate has voted. I shall return to that aspect and to its paramount importance.

Sir Hugh Annesley, Chief Constable of Northern Ireland, yesterday gave an extensive interview to the BBC in which he described the background to those events and the events themselves. I have placed a transcript of that interview in the Library. I commend it strongly to the House. It sets out the facts.

Unprecedented efforts had been made by the Government, Church leaders, the RUC and others to secure an accommodation in Portadown. The Chief Constable makes it clear that, ever since January, he personally, and his deputy chief constable, Mr. Flannigan, had tried with both sides at Portadown to negotiate a compromise. I pay special tribute to the entirely independent efforts of the Church leaders, who strove for two days and nights to bring the two sides together—sadly, without achieving success.

The Chief Constable is required by law to consider the likelihood of serious disorder if a notified march proceeds. He has to make an operational, professional and impartial judgment. That judgment, under our clearly established constitutional arrangements, is for him alone.

On Thursday 6 July, the Chief Constable had duly decided to order that the return stage of the Orange Order parade at Portadown, which was to take place the following day, should be re-routed away from the Garvaghy road. A lawful order was accordingly made to that effect.

That decision was made because he anticipated serious organised disorder—not limited to Portadown protesters—if the intended return stage of the march went ahead. A counter-march planned by the Garvaghy road residents also had restrictions placed on it, although, in the event, it did not take place. I wish to make it clear that, in taking that operational decision at that time and in those circumstances, the Chief Constable had and retains the Government's full support.

Over the next four days, serious disorder occurred in Drumcree and many other parts of the Province. There was a clear and reprehensible intention to overstretch the capacity of the RUC to maintain public order. At Drumcree itself, the Chief Constable has said in his own language that the most insidious, despicable and disgusting threats were made to his officers in the front line, to the effect that their wives or families would be got at. Elsewhere, the RUC was fiercely engaged. There was intimidation of officers' families and other civilians, with widespread blocking of roads and attacks on property.

The RUC, with full support from the Army, did its duty with great resolution in responding to this critical situation. At the request of the Chief Constable, two further battalions were brought into the Province in support of his force. However, despite the sustained efforts to which I have referred, it proved impossible for the two sides in the local community at Drumcree to reach an agreement.

On the morning of 11 July, after considering a number of options and having awaited the outcome of the on-going attempts at mediation, the Chief Constable decided that a limited parade down the Garvaghy road was the option most likely to prevent loss of life. He has made it clear that it was foreseeable that, by the night of 11 July, some 60,000 to 70,000 Orange marchers would be invited by the Orange Order to converge on Drumcree, and an attempt had already been made to get through the fence.

In that event, he foresaw that they would overrun the wire, obliging the police and the military to withdraw and to attempt to protect the Garvaghy road estate. He concluded that there would be serious risk of lives being lost, including on the Garvaghy estate, and he has said that he would not in any circumstances have

"traded one life for the Garvaghy Road".

In that decision also, the Chief Constable has the Government's full support. We also share his regret at what he described as

"an outrageous attempt by one side to impose their will on the other by the sheer weight of force."

I recognise, of course, that the nationalist community, or many of its members, are bitterly critical of this decision, but it was taken very much with the safety of the Garvaghy road residents in mind. I am in no doubt, however, that, under the circumstances, it was the right decision. The violence that followed in many nationalist areas was no more justified or acceptable than that

fomented by loyalists earlier in the week. Once again, the security forces came under intense attack from gunfire, as well as petrol bombs and other missiles.

The police have responded proportionately, and with great courage and professionalism, to the attacks.

The police investigation into the bomb attack on the hotel at Enniskillen is now under way. While it is too early to say which organisation was responsible, it seems clear that preparations for that attack began well before the events at Drumcree.

The events surrounding Drumcree and the march on the Lower Ormeau road in Belfast on 12 July have underscored the potentially destabilising effect of controversial parades. There are no immediately obvious answers. Over many months, my right hon. Friend the Minister of State, Northern Ireland Office, the Member for Westminster, North (Sir J. Wheeler) has been seeking to avoid conflict in this year's marching season. As I said in the House last week, I now have in mind a general review that will make recommendations about the better management of future controversial parades.

I therefore confirm today that the Government intend to establish a review based on evidence that any interested party will be free to submit. I envisage that the review will examine the current arrangements for handling parades and marches in Northern Ireland. I shall announce further details of the review later, including the name of the chairman and detailed terms of reference.

Recent events, however, are but a symptom of the much deeper divisions that plague Northern Ireland. Along with all politicians who are committed to a peaceful solution, we must continue to seek to overcome them.

That can be achieved only in a talks process that can address all the issues and is committed to securing an agreed outcome that respects the aspirations and principles of both parts of the community. I referred earlier to the democratic process of talks that is in place. It is now more imperative than ever that it begins to address the substantive issues that lie at the heart of the divisions that have had such terrible consequences. I am pleased that the process continues tomorrow.

For our part, the Government are fully committed to the talks process. My right hon. Friend the Prime Minister and I will be meeting the leaders of each of the parties involved over the coming days to hear their views of the way forward and to emphasise our commitment to the talks process.

I shall also be making arrangements, in consultation with the Irish Government, to meet them at an intergovernmental conference to discuss the mutual security interests between our two countries, and to demonstrate the reasons behind last week's decisions. On that basis, we intend to rebut very firmly the quite unjustified and unwarranted criticism that has been made of the Government and the RUC. In particular, my purpose will be, in the presence of the Chief Constable, to rebut any suggestion of political interference in his operational decisions.

All those who wish to lead Northern Ireland towards a more peaceful future—and they certainly include the Government—must now work together to re-establish trust and dialogue. None of us can accept a return to the violence of the past 25 years. We all have a responsibility to do what we can to avoid that and to demonstrate

beyond all doubt that it is truly possible to find political and peaceful means of resolving Northern Ireland profound problems. That is the challenge that confronts us now.

Ms Marjorie Mowlam (Redcar): Nothing can excuse the violence and destruction that has occurred over the past weekend. In the interests of peace—for which the people of Northern Ireland are crying out—it must stop.

We congratulate and support those who have exercised restraint and encouraged others to do the same. None of us should underestimate the seriousness of the problems in Northern Ireland today. A peace process that was already in serious difficulties has been dealt a mighty blow. It now requires real efforts from everyone if it is to be rescued. As the Secretary of State said, trust and confidence have suffered greatly. We congratulate the police in London on the discovery of bomb-making equipment this morning. Quality intelligence and assiduous investigation are the terrorists' worst enemy.

We totally condemn the callous bombing of the Killyhevlin hotel in Enniskillen. I am appalled that the people of that beautiful town, who have suffered so much, should be made to suffer again. It shows simply the boundless cowardice of the bombers. We condemn also the atrocious violence and rioting across Northern Ireland, and offer our condolences to the families and friends of the two men who have tragically lost their lives.

Security and vigilance are necessary to protect people. But, as with all policing matters, the police can only operate effectively with consent. Does the Secretary of State accept that the rule of law is paramount, and that the confidence of both communities in the institutions responsible for enforcing the rule of law is essential?

On the events of last week, will the Secretary of State acknowledge that the police were put in an impossible situation in Portadown, and that their resources were overstretched by a co-ordinated show of hostile activity across Northern Ireland? Will he now acknowledge to the House what he refused to condemn last week—that, in the words of the Chief Constable of the RUC,

"the consent to comply with the rule of law did not exist with the Portadown Orange Lodge. They were not encouraged to do so by constitutional politicians and they should have done"?

We commend the residents of the Garvaghy road—whom I met and spoke to last week—along with the police, Church leaders and some in the Unionist tradition who, over weeks and months, have made determined efforts to reach agreement. But does the Secretary of State accept that it is his responsibility to set the political framework within which local negotiations can take place with a hope of success? Does he accept that his failure to act, as we and many others have urged for many months, in a proactive way to help to resolve disputes and contentious parades makes him partly responsible for the failure to reach a local agreement?

The Secretary of State has announced today a review, with details and terms of reference to follow. Does he understand that such an unspecific announcement of a general review is not the most helpful at this time? Will he consider some of the suggestions that have been made for an independent commission to address matters such as the guidelines for the conduct of parades that respect tradition but eliminate intimidation and triumphalism; helping to ensure that decisions about the routing of parades are made in a fair and consistent fashion; and the effectiveness of the existing law in relation to parades?

[Ms Marjorie Mowlam]

Let me make it clear that we are not arguing that operational matters relating to marches should be taken out of the hands of the police; nor do we want to undermine the existing mediation efforts. But urgent steps must be taken. When can we expect the details of the review? When will it begin? What will be its status? When will it report? The people of Northern Ireland want answers to these important questions.

On the broader political level, we welcome the Secretary of State's announcement this afternoon that he will meet the Irish Foreign Minister, Dick Spring, tomorrow. Working together, the two Governments have given impetus to the search for peace. They must set the example by co-operating now if they expect the parties in Northern Ireland to climb over their frustration and anger also.

For our part, the Opposition have maintained a bipartisan approach, based on the two Governments' endorsements of the principles and proposals outlined in the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Downing street declaration and the joint framework document. Our support, like today, has sometimes been critical, but it is, I hope, always constructive. What I have said this afternoon is entirely in that spirit.

It would greatly help if everybody involved in this disastrous situation would acknowledge their part in its creation and stand up and take their share of the blame. That includes those who have threatened force to achieve their ends, those who have failed to act in advance and those—among whom I include myself—who failed to press their case for early action to sufficient effect.

Many parallels have been drawn in the press today with the events of 1969. If we can learn anything from the violence and deaths of the intervening years, it is that we should all have the courage to do what is necessary, so that we do not live our history over again.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for the hon. Lady's congratulations to the security forces on the way in which they have handled these extremely difficult and dangerous circumstances in Northern Ireland, and for the recent finds in London. I am glad to agree that the rule of law is paramount in any democratic and decent society.

I also agree that, for some time at Drumcree, the RUC was put in an impossible position, as the Chief Constable made clear yesterday in the interview to which I referred. I agree that, following the 6 July decision by the Chief Constable, a lawful order had been made that the return stage of the march should not go down the Garvaghy road. It was therefore the duty of all concerned to comply with that order—that duty was not complied with, and I greatly deplore that.

The hon. Lady said that failure to act on the part of the Government makes me responsible for the riots that took place. [HON. MEMBERS: "She did not say that."] It is her privilege to make any allegation of that character that she likes. I accept that the full responsibility that properly lies with the Secretary of State, and have done for some four and a quarter years.

As I said, however, the Government have been far from idle during the period that elapsed after July last year. I will not repeat the particulars, but in fairness I should be allowed to remind the hon. Lady that I wrote to her on 7 March saying:

"Regrettably attitudes on both sides have hardened, which does not inspire confidence although discussions continue. I also believe that other routes"—

I was referring earlier to the efforts of the Chief Constable and the RUC—

"such as mediation network are involved and it is to be hoped they can assist others to find a solution. We are not, however, complacent. John Wheeler and officials are examining whether there are any other avenues of approach but the answer must lie with the various groups involved talking to each other and being prepared to accommodate views which do not coincide with their own. Failing that, the RUC will endeavour to minimise the problems associated with individual parades."

In June, I wrote to the hon. Lady in reply to a further letter from her, saying that, having set up a working group internally,

"an independent body to advise the police about individual contentious parades"

was not an idea that had more going for it than against it. Towards the end of that letter, I said:

"I do not . . . have a closed mind on this issue; the subject is one that might well usefully be addressed in the current Political Talks or the Forum, and in any event I will wish to revisit the whole question of parades in the light of our experience during the current marching season."

I also said:

"John Wheeler has been doing a great deal of work behind the scenes to try to persuade those organising the most controversial marches (and those who may have influence over the organisers) to adopt a more flexible attitude."

It is wise of the hon. Lady to welcome my announcement today. The review can, of course, hear any representations advocating any solution that any interested party may feel it right to make. We cannot conceivably anticipate the length of time that the review will take, but it is desirable that we follow that method as a possible way of ensuring that next year and thereafter Northern Ireland is not subject to the tortures that have disfigured it this month.

Mr. David Trimble (Upper Bann): First, I repeat the appeal that my colleagues and I have made in the past week to the loyalist paramilitaries to maintain their ceasefire, whatever the circumstances and whatever may happen. The people of Northern Ireland earnestly hope that that ceasefire will be maintained, even if other ceasefires have not been.

The Secretary of State referred to a review on the management of parades. Will that review extend to the public order legislation introduced within the past decade, which has manifestly failed? Can the right hon. Gentleman also give some indication of what he intends to do before next year, because we are not out of the woods yet and significant problems are not far ahead, which will require urgent attention?

Does he agree that the first priority must be to try to restore public confidence in Northern Ireland in the political process, and that that will not be done by actions such as those of the Social Democratic and Labour party in adopting the Sinn Féin policy of abstention, particularly with regard to the democratic element of the talks process to which the Secretary of State referred? That process is a package, and it has to be considered as a whole.

We will not restore confidence by promoting the Anglo-Irish process, which has been part of the problem, especially with regard to Portadown but also generally with regard to the people of Northern Ireland. It is part of the problem, not the solution.

However, I welcome the Secretary of State's proposal to consult political parties. I suggest that that should be done as quickly as possible and that the focus should be on the major political parties, by which I mean those that participated in the 1992 talks. We need consultation, whether individually or, preferably, jointly, as soon as possible to see where we go from here, and find whether we can in some way add to confidence in the community.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly endorse and welcome the hon. Gentleman's appeal to the loyalist organisations to maintain their ceasefire.

He asked whether the review will extend to the public order legislation. It should be entirely open to the review to consider whether the legislation is sufficient or whether—and, if so, in what ways—it should be amended and enhanced.

He asked about immediate steps to deal with urgent problems that are on the horizon, or nearer than the horizon, before we enter next year's marching season. It is important that there should be a discussion of these matters as soon as possible within the substantive talks. It is very important that all of us—that includes the Government—should seek to analyse and proclaim the lessons to be learned from the hideous events of the past 10 days. I believe that there are very many in Northern Ireland who have been deeply shocked by what has occurred, who will wish to reflect, and are already reflecting deeply, on the way forward.

I very much regret any suggestion that any party may make about withdrawing from the Forum. The Forum was the immediate purpose of the elections and I believe that it is a sad thing if any party is to withdraw from a forum in which it is open to all in Northern Ireland to make their views known about the issues of the hour, including the present issue.

I regret that there should be any notion that the future of Northern Ireland is advanced by people excluding themselves rather than furthering an inclusive process, which certainly extends, on proper terms, to the talks process itself. I welcome the hon. Gentleman's acceptance of the need for consultations with the parties, and the Government look forward to carrying them forward.

Mr. Tom King (Bridgwater): Does my right hon. and learned Friend recognise that, as my time of office started with trouble on the Garvaghy road and tunnel at Portadown and included the bomb at Enniskillen, it would be easy to believe that nothing has changed in Northern Ireland? Yet I profoundly believe that, so enormous has been the welcome for the period of peace that was achieved—and so manifest the benefits to the Province—and so ghastly have been the implications of the past week, that nothing could more clearly underline the importance of the work to which he has set his hand and of continuing the political efforts to try to achieve a sensible accommodation between the different interests.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am most grateful to my right hon. Friend, who speaks with great experience of the office that I have the privilege to hold. He speaks of the paramount importance of a political talks process as offering the only alternative to violence and force as a means of securing political objectives. I believe that the

huge majority of people in Northern Ireland will endorse what he has said, and seek to see that that view is implemented and carried through.

Sir David Steel (Tweeddale, Ettrick and Lauderdale): My right hon. and hon. Friends welcome the review into parading and marching that the Secretary of State has announced. Does he accept that the right to demonstrate and march is carefully safeguarded throughout the United Kingdom, but that it cannot be extended to a right to march on a precise route in a provocative manner that has been deemed unwise by the chief constable? That is an extension of the right which does not apply in any part of the United Kingdom.

Does he also accept that we in this House are entitled to expect fellow parliamentarians who describe themselves as loyalists to show a higher standard of leadership than we saw during last week, higher leadership than simply to say, "There is a crowd—I must follow it"? Does he accept that we in the Liberal Democratic party support the Government in their pursuit of the political talks in the Province and in their dialogue with the Government of the Republic? I hope that that dialogue will resume very soon.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I have said that we expect to have further dialogue. I hope that we shall do so this week, in the talks process and in a meeting under the conference. I intend to provide the occasion for the representations that I have already mentioned in my statement.

I acknowledge what the right hon. Gentleman has said about the importance of the right to march, to parade and to demonstrate one's feelings, culture and identity. I also agree that that right has to be qualified. It certainly has to be qualified by an obligation to obey an order lawfully made by a chief constable. It is not helpful for me to engage in attributions of blame, certainly not of individual blame. Each of us here in the House is responsible for his own conduct.

Mr. Michael Mates (East Hampshire): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that those of us who comment on, take an interest in and speak out on these matters, mostly from the comfort of an English armchair, would be well advised to refrain from criticising a senior police officer who has done his very best in the most difficult circumstances to take operational decisions which sometimes have to be taken on the spur of the moment? Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that he should be commended for the job that he is doing, however much it has brought opprobrium on him, when he was doing what he thought was right?

Does my right hon. and learned Friend also agree that those who have come to this House from time to time urging that the law be not broken owe it to us to ensure that they do not disobey laws of which they may disapprove, and that defiance of the law and of police forces trying to enforce the law is equally unacceptable from whichever side of the community it comes?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much welcome what my hon. Friend has said about the Chief Constable. He has taken an unparalleled degree of personal criticism. I reiterate what I said in my statement on behalf of the Government: we uphold each of the decisions that he took.

[Sir Patrick Mayhew]

The second decision was taken in very different circumstances from the first. It would have been a weak man who, recognising that the situation had deteriorated gravely since the original decision on 6 July, none the less, through fears of facile accusations of a U-turn, held in inappropriate circumstances to the same decision. There are some questions that can be ducked from the safety of non-responsibility, and some questions have been ducked by those in high places who have expressed their view recently. The one person who cannot duck an essential and central question is the Chief Constable.

I agree with what my hon. Friend has said about the mutual character of the obligations that are imposed by the rule of law.

Mr. Thomas McAvooy (Glasgow, Rutherglen): The Secretary of State is correct to say that we must all now look forward, but he should be aware that the test of history will be applied to his actions, his behaviour and his conversations on the morning of 11 July. Bearing in mind recent reports in the media that the Prime Minister's feelings have been hurt, and that he has refused to sanction meetings with the Irish Government because he is in a huff, does the Secretary of State accept that it is unacceptable to the people of the United Kingdom that, while people are dying and being evicted from their houses, we have a Prime Minister sulking in Downing street?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am sorry that the hon. Gentleman, who takes a close interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland and frequently expresses, if I may say so, reasonable and sensible views, should have fallen far short of the level that the hour requires. He may not have heard me say that there is to be a meeting in the intergovernmental conference between the two Governments for the purpose that I have described. Therefore, it is regrettable, and I think that he will come to regret it, that he began his question in the way that he did.

One gets used to the knowledge that history will judge one's actions. I do not care what history says: I care that I discharge sensibly and properly the obligations that are imposed on me. I am able, in the context of criticism that has been laid, to point to what was said by the Chief Constable yesterday and previously. He said unequivocally that he was subjected to no political interference or influence at the beginning, in the middle or at the end of that episode. [Interruption.] The hon. Gentleman can reject that if he likes.

Mr. Andrew Hunter (Basingstoke): I warmly welcome and support my right hon. Friend's statement. May I invite him to revisit some of the ground that he has covered? Does he agree that there are now three priorities—to uphold public order and to protect life and property, to promote dialogue, communication and contact among those who are genuinely committed to non-violence and democracy—because there is no other way forward—and to secure harmonious relations with the Government of the Republic of Ireland, whose understanding, support and friendship in key respects is so essential?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: My hon. Friend is absolutely right in all three of the priorities he addresses and it is

right to uphold, above all, the sanctity of life and the safety of people. Injustice to people has been paramount in the consequences of violence of the character that we have seen. The promotion of contact between all sides of the community is very important and must be pursued, especially in the light of what has happened.

Harmonious relations with the Republic of Ireland are also important. I have had to respond robustly to what I knew to be unjust criticisms uttered over the weekend, but we must get through this period, as I am certain we shall, and resume the constructive and forward-looking relationships that have always characterised progress in this area.

Mr. Tony Benn (Chesterfield): The Secretary of State asks us to be objective, but he left one factor out of his account—the role of Britain in Ireland over many centuries. During the years of British jurisdiction, peace and social justice have never been achieved, and, since partition, no Government, Labour or Conservative—even when troops were sent in, as happened when I was in the Cabinet in 1969—have ever achieved anything.

It is clear from the events of the past few days not only that the nationalists are pursuing their desire for freedom from Britain, but that the so-called loyalists will be loyal only as long as they can control what the police and the Government do. Therefore, in a sense, a consensus is emerging, because neither community in the north trusts the British Government. The time is coming when we shall have to consider the truth, which the world knows—that Britain cannot and should not exercise jurisdiction, and that any peace force would have to be international, and not made up of British forces.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I do not think that the right hon. Gentleman will carry any significant support for his last point. It cannot be proper for any Government of the United Kingdom to cut loose a province of the United Kingdom in which a substantial majority of people wish to remain part of the United Kingdom, and have demonstrated that in vote after vote. I do not believe that the course that the right hon. Gentleman has proposed is honourable.

I recognise, unlike some who describe themselves as "loyalist", that there has been a selective approach to loyalty, in the sense that some have thought it acceptable to perpetrate the violence I have described this afternoon against, in particular, the Royal Ulster Constabulary, whose function and duty it is to maintain the Queen's peace.

The right hon. Gentleman is associated, above all, with democracy and being a democrat, and I hope that he will recognise that adherence to democracy in the context of Northern Ireland involves not only giving but honouring the constitutional guarantee that the status of Northern Ireland will remain unchanged unless and until most people living there freely indicate that they want it to change.

Mr. Norman Lamont (Kingston upon Thames): Is my right hon. and learned Friend aware that he has aroused great sympathy and admiration for the way in which he has dealt with his awe-inspiring responsibilities? Is it not time to recognise that there is no "middle way" between Unionism and nationalism—to use the phrase of the Irish

Foreign Minister? If we pursue a middle way that does not exist, there is a danger that we will arouse nationalist expectations that cannot be fulfilled and provoke a reaction from the majority? Therefore, is it not time to consider a fresh approach that would see Ulster governed more like the rest of the United Kingdom?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful for my right hon. Friend's initial comments. He said that there is no "middle way" between Unionism and nationalism—by definition, the two lead in opposite directions. However, in using that phrase, I hope that my right hon. Friend does not mean that there is no practicable means by which Unionists and nationalists can co-exist in tranquillity in Northern Ireland. I do not think that he means that.

Mr. Lamont indicated dissent.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I see my right hon. Friend shaking his head, and I am not surprised. Therefore, the Government are not seeking to help the people of Northern Ireland achieve a "middle way" between Unionism and nationalism, but to achieve that tranquil co-existence. I do not believe that, in practical terms, seeking to administer Northern Ireland as though it had no problems not to be found in Surrey, Kent or Westmorland is likely to achieve the tranquillity and the acceptance by nationalists and Unionists of their ability to live together that my right hon. Friend and the whole Government wish to see.

Mr. Clive Soley (Hammersmith): Is not the sad truth that a very impressive Chief Constable has seen his authority undermined, because the rule of law was not upheld? It is his duty to exercise the Queen's writ in Northern Ireland, and it is the Government's duty to support him when mob rule threatens the police. The charge against the Government is that they did not uphold the rule of law.

Does the Secretary of State agree that the only way to put right this desperate situation is to make it clear that the Orange Order or any other organisation—Unionist or nationalist—will never again be able to exercise a veto over the lawful decisions of the police or the British Government?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am very sorry to hear the hon. Gentleman speak in those terms—[HON. MEMBERS: "Why?"]—and I shall say why. The hon. Gentleman criticises the Government, whom he alleges failed to support the Chief Constable and the police in the face of violence.

I have made it clear that the Chief Constable had to consider his powers, which Parliament has conferred upon him. He must consider whether there is a risk of serious disorder in one circumstance or another: in the case of a march that continues, or a march that is banned. Therefore, by definition, Parliament has recognised that there is a foreseeable risk that violence will be offered in Northern Ireland in one circumstance or another. It has told the Chief Constable that he must consider that matter.

When he made his first decision to ban the return stage of the march, I heard no one in nationalist or Irish circles complain that, in banning the march in the face of threatened disorder, the Chief Constable was bowing the

knee to violence. I never heard that criticism—which would have been quite unjust. It is interesting to note that only when a decision adverse to their interests is made five days later and in different circumstances is the Chief Constable told that he is bowing the knee to violence and that the Government—who were not criticised initially, either—have somehow connived in that. I reject that claim.

Mr. David Wilshire (Spelthorne): I commend my right hon. and learned Friend for the calm way in which he has handled the tragic events. Does he agree that the Irish Prime Minister's intemperate comments confirm what some of us have thought for a long time: that the Dublin Government believe that the Anglo-Irish Agreement gives them control over the internal affairs of the United Kingdom and the right to demand that British Ministers explain themselves to a foreign Government? If that is so, is it not time to consider ending the Anglo-Irish Agreement?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I thank my hon. Friend for what he said at the outset. I made it clear, as it was my duty to do as soon as I heard them, my view of the remarks made by the Taoiseach, which were mentioned by my hon. Friend. I do not want to dwell unnecessarily on them; it is necessary for us to look forward, to move on in the old constructive way that has always characterised in recent times the relationship between the two Governments.

Let me make one thing additionally clear. No Government exercise control over Northern Ireland save the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and so long as that remains the wish—freely expressed—of most people in Northern Ireland, that will continue to be the case. I do not recognise the assertion that the Irish Government reckon that the Anglo-Irish Agreement gives them control over what happens in Northern Ireland. The agreement gives them the right to make representations about many things, but control exists in this Government only, and that, subject to the qualification I mentioned, will remain the case.

Mr. Ken Maginnis (Fermanagh and South Tyrone): The Secretary of State will realise that the Killyhevlin hotel is in my constituency, that the bomb damage there places in jeopardy dozens of full-time and part-time jobs, and that the incident undermines the tourist infrastructure in my constituency. Does he agree, however, that, when people hoot derision rather than listen to what is being said by those of us who understand what is happening in Northern Ireland, those of us who regret and condemn violence from whatever quarter it comes in Northern Ireland must remind them that it was not against the background of any march that Canary Wharf occurred, that Hammersmith occurred, that Manchester occurred, that Warrington occurred, that a Garda officer was shot in Adare, that my constituents were murdered at a British Legion parade in Enniskillen nine years ago.

All those things should be reckoned with and understood by the House when it tries to make judgments against people who are afraid that their civil rights, and their very right to exist as an integral part of the United Kingdom, are being slowly and deliberately eroded and taken from them.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: There are many fears, many anxieties and very deep feelings—some of them of a character that the hon. Gentleman just described—held

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right across the community in Northern Ireland. That is one of the great difficulties. I recognise, of course, the hon. Gentleman's close association with the Killyhevlin hotel in Enniskillen, and I recognise the grievous injury that has been done to the hotel, but more importantly, of course, to the individuals who suffered shock and injury.

I also recognise that none of the earlier episodes that the hon. Gentleman mentioned is connected in any way with any march. I only hesitate to follow him down that line of thinking lest I be thought to agree with anybody who would suggest that any grievance of whatever character can justify the sort of things that have happened in the past few years—I know that the hon. Gentleman is not suggesting that.

The truth of the matter is that life is sacrosanct. Nothing can justify the taking of a life. I return to what the Chief Constable said yesterday in his interview, that the protection of proper sensitivities about the Garvaghy road could never be traded for a single life, and that was the justification for the decision that he took.

Sir Peter Hordern (Horsham): I welcome the inquiry into future marches into the Province, but does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that it is most unwise ever to question the operational judgment of a senior chief constable, as has happened in this case, whose charge it is to preserve the safety of individuals in the Province, and that is so whether that criticism comes from this country or from the Prime Minister of a foreign country? Will my right hon. and learned Friend acknowledge that now is the time for all sides to show commitment to the peace process, not only from this country and from all parties, but from Dublin as well?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I warmly endorse what my right hon. Friend has said. One becomes used to the versatility of one's critics, and I dare say that the Chief Constable does as well. He has been criticised because, it is said, there was political interference; he has denied that. Then there are those who say, "Well, if there was not political interference, there should have been. That is not a matter for the Chief Constable, but a matter for the House."

Let me tell my right hon. Friend why I think that public confidence demands that such decisions shall rest not with a politician, but with a Chief Constable or other senior police officer. I do not think that the public would have confidence in an alternative system that enabled a Minister to say, "Our political opponents are going to have a march next week. We will soon stop that: we will use the public order legislation."

I very much agree with what my right hon. Friend said about the importance of the peace talks process, and with what he has had to say about the importance of the democratic will of people being heard, heeded and acceded to. He is a very experienced Member of the House, and I am grateful to him for what he has said.

Mr. David Winnick (Walsall, North): I am one of those—including the majority of Members of Parliament—who believe that, over 25 years, we have been right to respect the views of the majority community in Northern Ireland and their wish to remain part of the United Kingdom, and thus right to oppose terrorist violence.

Is it not the case, however, that, time and again, large elements of the loyalist community have used force and intimidation? That happened last week, and it happened in 1974, when the loyalists disagreed with a power-sharing agreement reached by the United Kingdom Parliament. At the end of the day, is there not a limit to the patience of the British people in dealing with Northern Ireland? The loyalist elements who demonstrated last week, breaking the law, should recognise that.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I acknowledge the view that the hon. Gentleman has consistently taken about the pre-eminence of the majority, and the majority view, in a democracy—provided that that view is freely expressed and the contrary view can also be freely expressed. I acknowledge that the hon. Gentleman has taken a wholly consistent, and, if I may say so, courageous line on that. I also acknowledge that large numbers of those who purported to support the Union have, over the past 10 days, defied the security forces, including a police force whose duty it is to uphold the law for everyone's sake, and indulged in violence.

When the hon. Gentleman spoke of a limit to the patience of the British people, I wondered where he would take that. I feared that he was going to say, "Cut the place loose." I firmly believe that that is not something that the majority of the British people will ever agree to, contrary to the democratic wishes of people in Northern Ireland; nor should that ever happen. I think, however, that the hon. Gentleman was referring to a limit to patience with people who apply double standards. I think that that patience ran out a long time ago, and that that should be made very clear.

Mr. Barry Porter (Wirral, South): My right hon. and learned Friend will have noticed the absence from the Chamber not only of the SDLP but of the Democratic Unionist party. Apparently they think that the political process is all over, and from their point of view, it probably is. That reality must be faced.

May I echo the views of my right hon. Friend the Member for Kingston upon Thames (Mr. Lamont) and my hon. Friend the Member for Spelthorne (Mr. Wilshire)? We shall not get very far unless we face reality, and the reality is that part of the problem is the Anglo-Irish Agreement. At least it is worth looking at. The problem posed by the agreement was that it caused unrealistic expectations in the nationalist community, and put the fear of God into the Unionists. We must look at that very soon.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I hope that my hon. Friend, who also takes a consistent and close interest in the affairs of Northern Ireland, will allow me to remind him that the talks process is a process within which, among other things, the Anglo-Irish Agreement can be reviewed, considered and amended or changed, and that that has been the consistent position of both Governments for many years. They are prepared to consider a replacement for the Anglo-Irish agreement, if it will secure wider acceptance. Therefore, this is yet another reason why the talks process should be maintained and sustained, despite the difficulties.

Miss Kate Hoey (Vauxhall): In condemning utterly the violence and intimidation of the past week, may I urge the Secretary of State to take whatever measures

are necessary to ensure that the rule of law is maintained in Northern Ireland so that people can sleep safely in their beds?

Given the Anglo-Irish agreement, however, will he say how he felt about what I personally thought were sad remarks by the Taoiseach at the weekend? Should we not remind the Taoiseach that, while the Republic of Ireland still lays an illegal claim to Northern Ireland through articles 2 and 3 of the Republic's constitution, frankly, it does not make the pro-Union majority in Northern Ireland feel confident about the Republic of Ireland Government's views?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: Anyone in the House who knows the interest that the hon. Lady has always taken will not have been surprised to hear her condemn the violence of the past period. I readily accept, of course, the opportunity she offers me to say that all practicable steps will be taken to maintain and to uphold the rule of law.

The hon. Lady referred to the remarks of Mr. Bruton, the Taoiseach. I have made my view on those clear and I do not want to dwell on them, although it was right that I should have spoken as I did, because we feel strongly that it was a great pity that they were uttered in those terms and in those circumstances; but one must not dwell unduly on these matters. One must take the opportunity to come together, to thrash them out—which is what I intend to do, among other things, at an early opportunity—and to come together again and make common cause in what we have a common interest in: a constructive way to help people in Northern Ireland come through to a settled accommodation of their differences.

Mr. Tony Marlow (Northampton, North): How does my right hon. and learned Friend react to the widely held view that the first essential is for a large degree of constitutional certainty—that Northern Ireland is, and is likely for the foreseeable future to remain, an integral part of the United Kingdom, and that Her Majesty's Government have and will continue to have sole responsibility for the government of Northern Ireland? On that stable basis, it would be possible to devise a strategy to take account of the aspirations and interests of all sections of the community.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I very much agree that, if stability is to be achieved, there is a need for a wide degree of constitutional certainty, and I am surprised to infer from what my hon. Friend says that that is not present in Northern Ireland at the moment. In modern times, no one has taken more pains to express the constitutional guarantee than my right hon. Friend the Prime Minister.

I have already recited today what it says. I will not do so again, but there can be no doubt whatever about the Government's determination to uphold and to honour that guarantee. In fairness, I have never heard it suggested on behalf of the official Opposition that it would be less safe with them—I hope and trust that that would be the case. Therefore, that certainty is there, or the grounds for it are there, and it is incumbent on all of us who have a claim to speak in public on these matters not to do anything to cast doubt on it.

Mr. Dennis Skinner (Bolsover): Is the Secretary of State aware that it stretches the bounds of credibility for him to tell us and the nation that, somehow or other, in the middle of the crisis last week, the Government played no part in the Chief Constable changing his mind?

Just over 10 years ago, the same Government found a way, somehow or other, of instructing every chief constable, in every coalfield area in Britain—in Durham, Scotland, Wales, Derbyshire and Yorkshire—to tell miners that they could not go here, there or anywhere, and 11,000 of them were arrested. The real reason for the Government's double standards is that the miners did not wear orange sashes and bowler hats, and did not have the Government's fate in their hands.

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am glad to have an opportunity to resume my contest with the hon. Gentleman, who, in the days when I had responsibility as a Law Officer, used to assume the mantle of the National Union of Mineworkers' vicar upon the surface and engaged me in weekly contests.

The hon. Gentleman says that it strains credulity. I do not care whether the hon. Gentleman believes the Chief Constable or me. I have a duty to carry out my responsibilities in the way that I have described. Of course it may be easier to accept the word of those who carry public responsibilities in Derbyshire, and if that is the hon. Gentleman's view, so be it: I can live with that, philosophically. The Chief Constable has said what happened, and I endorse it.

Mr. Richard Spring (Bury St. Edmunds): Does my right hon. and learned Friend agree that, whatever the current difficulties of the peace process, it was overwhelmingly set back by the terrible bomb explosion at South Quay several months ago? Does he agree that the quickest way to restore calm and the prospect of long-term stability in Northern Ireland would be a declaration of an immediate cessation of violence by the IRA and a ceasefire?

Sir Patrick Mayhew: I am grateful to my hon. Friend for raising the issue that is at the heart of the danger to peace—the IRA's abandonment of its ceasefire. One of the tragedies of recent events is that that has been lost sight of.

There is only one way to secure peace in Northern Ireland, and it is by all concerned not only signing up to the Mitchell principles of non-violence and democracy but also honouring them. Of course, before that can lead to an invitation to take part in the talks process, there has first and foremost to be an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire by the IRA. Events such as those that my hon. Friend describes make it difficult to see how that can be regarded as unequivocal in the short term.

Mr. John D. Taylor (Strangford): Can the Secretary of State confirm that the Army and the police were subjected to attacks by bricks and petrol bombs at Garvaghy road on Thursday 11 July? If that is right, does it not seem odd that that behaviour by the people of Garvaghy road was described last night on Radio Telefís Éireann in Dublin by the Southern Irish Prime Minister as disciplined and carried out peacefully and with dignity?

Again for the purposes of the record, can the Secretary of State confirm that the RUC arrested at least 100 loyalists in the first four days of last week and cleared

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dozens of roads, since Cardinal Daly went to church in Portadown last night and alleged that the RUC had not arrested any loyalists or cleared any roads? That is in the *Irish News* today.

As we look forward to the future, may I ask the Secretary of State, who has stressed the importance of accommodation and dialogue, whether he welcomes the decision by the Ulster Unionist party to be at the multi-party talks tomorrow morning at 10 o'clock at Stormont, expecting to see all other parties present?

Does he accept that underlying all these problems has been, first, the breach of the ceasefire by the IRA and, secondly, the role of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and the lack of trust that it is continually building up in Northern Ireland? Does he also accept that, regrettably, more and more people are being pushed to the position stated by Edmund Burke, who said:

"There is, however, a limit at which forbearance ceases to be a virtue?"

Sir Patrick Mayhew: It is, of course, right that, when the RUC attempted to maintain order as, under its control, a limited march went down the Garvaghy road on the 11th, it came under fire, and bricks and petrol bombs were used. I think that it is right that some 2,000 petrol bombs had been manufactured and were fired. However, I speak from recollection, and would not wish to be held precisely to that. The point is that a very hostile reception of that character had been prepared.

It is also the case that many loyalists had been arrested previously by the RUC. I shall not comment on the merits of any of those cases, but the fact is that many loyalists had been arrested. I believe that that gives the lie to the charge that the RUC showed itself to be partisan and partial.

I, too, welcome the fact that the Ulster Unionist party will be present at the talks tomorrow. I do not want to add—I do not need to add—to what I have said about the paramount importance of that process, and of it being as inclusive as possible on proper and equal terms.

I have already mentioned the breach of the ceasefire. It is of central importance, and is totally unjustified in a democracy.

I do not think that I want to or need to add anything to what I have said about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Several hon. Members *rose*—

Madam Speaker: Thank you. We shall now move on.

Points of Order

4.35 pm

Ms Glenda Jackson (Hampstead and Highgate): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. On 24 June this year, I received a response to a question that I had asked of the Minister of State, Foreign and Commonwealth Office with responsibility for the Overseas Development Administration, about whether Her Majesty's Government would pay closer attention to Madam Aung San Suu Kyi's consistent calls for no encouragement of western business interests in her country until the State Law and Order Council shows a real commitment to democracy.

The Minister assured me that Her Majesty's Government are in very close contact with Madam Aung San Suu Kyi, and that they pay close attention to what she says. However, there were reports in yesterday's newspapers—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Speaker: Order. The hon. Lady must read her point of order. Reports in newspapers and exchanges across the Floor of the House are not my responsibility as Speaker. I deal with the House's procedures. What procedures may I deal with now?

Ms Jackson: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I am asking for your advice. The reply that I received—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Speaker: Order. Is this a request for advice or a point of order? If the hon. Lady requires procedural advice, she may come to my office at any time or see the learned Clerks. I should now like to know what is the hon. Lady's point of order, and what she is asking me to deal with.

Ms Jackson: Madam Speaker, the point of order is that a Minister of State, in response to a question from me, led the House to believe that the Government had a uniform policy on the calls made by Madam Aung San Suu Kyi in Burma. However, reports in yesterday's and today's newspapers underline the fact that the Department of Trade and Industry—[*Interruption.*]

Madam Speaker: Order. That is not a point of order. If the hon. Lady has a matter to pursue with the Minister, she must pursue it properly across the Floor of the House at Question Time.

Rev. Martin Smyth (Belfast, South): On a point of order, Madam Speaker. I appreciate your difficulty in calling on all hon. Members after statements, but today the Ormeau road in my constituency was specifically mentioned, and I was not given an opportunity to deal with the issues. I crave your indulgence, and ask for an opportunity to put the record straight before the House rises for the summer recess.

Madam Speaker: I understand the hon. Gentleman's point of order, and I have sympathy with him. I do my best to call all hon. Members who I think have a deep interest in a matter, and he certainly has such an interest in this matter. I am sure that he realises that, out of the