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SPEAKING NOTE - PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH SDLP

Marches

i Drumcree

Listened carefully to what you have to say. Understand the depth of feeling in nationalist community.

Don't believe it is helpful to argue over interpretation of past events. HMG has set out its account in Parliament, and the Chief Constable has been quite open in his view of events.

Whatever our different views, recognise there has been a serious set back. Widespread intimidation of Catholics despicable. Challenge by Orange marchers to rule of law a serious affront. Equally, nothing can justify rioting in nationalist areas.

We must now move on beyond the recriminations to find a political way forward. This is the only answer. None of us should give up on it.

ii Review of marches

Recognise need for wide ranging review. Secretary of State will consult you on terms of reference and appointments: want your views and suggestions.

Not to adjudicate on routes of individual marches, but to look at overall legal framework and whether there are any other mechanisms

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16 July 1996

Seamus Mallon, Eddie McGrady
The Secretary of State and
(and Michael Antram)
the depth of anger, sense of
the RUC which has united all
since the Orange march was
d. As a result nationalist
process has been dented: they
at HMG cannot persuade unionists

to reach an accommodation on reasonable terms; and see Sinn Féin as
close to rehabilitation (or, rather, that unionists have descended
to Sinn Féin's level).

There is little that can be said or done about feelings over past
events. The priority at the meeting will be to begin to restore
nationalist confidence in the talks process and to urge on them
continued positive engagement as the only realistic way forward.

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which can help to avoid conflict. Hope you will put to the review any ideas you have, including an independent commission to rule on parade routes.

iii Future marches

Understand the anxieties about this year's marches yet to come. Must all do what we can to encourage local agreement. Apprentice Boys' march in Derry in August a particular worry. What's your view of prospects for local compromise?

Talks process

(i) HMG's commitment

All of this only reinforces the need for fair and balanced political accommodation between unionists and nationalists. The Talks process offers the best chance of that.

Want you to know the Government is absolutely committed to this process. Worked hard to bring all parties together and determined not to allow it to be wrecked, whether by Sinn Féin or unionist extremists.

Remain absolutely committed to even-handed, impartial approach to Northern Ireland. Recognise that both communities must feel they are equal citizens of Northern Ireland. Parity of esteem continues to underpin our approach. The sort of approach set out in the Framework Document continues to be what we would regard as a balanced outcome to the talks.

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(ii) Making progress

Share your desire to see significant progress made quickly now. Share your frustration at procedural wrangling. But, after the two Government's demonstrated their commitment to standing behind Mitchell, it was important for unionists to feel they had a share in shaping the procedures for the negotiations.

How do you see the talks moving forward? Are you still prepared to see rules of procedure adopted which provide the only document to which the Chairmen would need to refer in conducting the negotiations? In these circumstances, would you withdraw your own amendment declaring that the Ground Rules take precedence?

Believe such a compromise still achievable. Best way to deliver it is to identify key outstanding issues on the rules of procedure, to resolve these with the UUP, and then seek to adopt the rules of procedure - if necessary without DUP and UKUP support. Agree this progress now needed quickly, in next couple of weeks.

We shall be making the case very strongly to Mr Trimble that substantive progress now required to restore faith in the political process. Ready to play a part myself, if it will help.

But threats to abandon the Talks process will not help. That can only play into the hands of the men of violence. It may be what some unionists - such as McCartney - have wanted all along. I am determined not to give them the satisfaction of wrecking the process.

(iii) Co-operation with Irish Government

Determined to work closely with the Irish Government. Had our public disagreements, but we will be putting those behind us. IGC on Thursday will be chance to show that two Governments stand together in their desire to see progress in the Talks process.

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