

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH LOYALISTS, 20 NOVEMBER

Press Line

The Prime Minister met representatives of the Progressive Unionist Party and Ulster Democratic Party today, his second meeting with them.

The Prime Minister again emphasised the importance of the loyalist ceasefire. He told the parties that the restraint of the loyalist paramilitaries, in the face of IRA violence, had earned them credit in Northern Ireland, Great Britain and beyond, and was for many people a real sign of hope for the future of Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister commended the constructive role the PUP and UDP were playing in the political talks. He stressed the Government's wish for early progress in the talks, and its determination to do all possible to bring it about.

The Prime Minister reaffirmed that Northern Ireland's constitutional status would be determined by the consent of the people there. The principle of consent was now accepted by all significant political parties in Ireland, except Sinn Fein. Recent remarks by the Taoiseach had made the Irish Government's position particularly clear. The Government would expect the talks to reach a wholly unambiguous consensus on constitutional matters.

The Prime Minister also told the parties that it was intended to introduce a number of important changes to prison regimes in Northern Ireland.