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**Interview with the Taoiseach and RTE
at the Opening of Hartstown Community School
on Monday 4th November 1996**

Interviewer:

If I could just ask you first of all Taoiseach about the importance of skills and Education in terms of getting the long-term unemployed in to jobs?

Taoiseach:

Well I believe that life long education is the most important thing to prepare for the 21st century, skills are going to go out of date as people live and work. What we need therefore is the commitment not only to good basic education but to retraining right through life. I believe the people who have the skills which are marketable abroad are the people who have the high incomes and that's very important from the point of career choices that students make.

Interviewer:

Taoiseach if I could just ask you about the North. Are you optimistic that John Hume's role as mediator at this moment will bring any solid fruits?

Taoiseach:

Well ever since the ceasefire broke down and once the IRA recommenced violence John Hume has been working tirelessly to find a way of persuading them to come back and recognise that the peace strategy is the only strategy. That violence has done nothing but cause division amongst our people on this island and that the peaceful political method is the only way of making progress. I think its fair to say that John Hume has worked right through this resumed period of violence on this and he I believe is very well placed to bring about a change in Republican opinion on this subject because I think many people in the Republican Movement itself now realise that their violence is self defeating and that the biggest victims of their violence in fact are their own people.

Interviewer:

Is it possible to establish some kind of fast track mechanism to allow Sinn Fein into talks within a matter of weeks?

Taoiseach:

The matter of the basis for the talks is set out in the Ground Rules for the talks, paragraph 8 and paragraph 9 of the Ground Rules are quite clear. It's clear that there has to be an unequivocal ceasefire and that there has to be satisfaction that there is no going back and that this time the ceasefire is one that will last. Obviously the work that is being done by John Hume and others is very helpful in that regard and I hope that that work will bear fruit. I am not making any predictions about the matter. I am not expressing optimism or pessimism. I am simply saying that I hope the work will bear fruit and I have reason to be hopeful that it will bear fruit.

ENDS.