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FROM: D J R HILL
CPL DIVISION
2 SEPTEMBER 1996

cc: Mr Thomas	-B
Mr Leach	-B
Mr Steele	-B
Mr Bell	-B
Mr Watkins	-B
Mr Stephens	-B
Mr Maccabe	-B
Ms Checksfield	-B
Mr Whysall	-B

Ms Mapstone - B

HMG'S DRAFT OPENING STATEMENT - REVISED

I had a few minor comments on the revised draft you circulated on 30 August:

- a) to talk of "entering/launching" the negotiations three months or more after 10 June sounds a little odd: I suggest that the opening sentence of paragraph 3 be rephrased to read, "the British Government is determined that these negotiations will"; and that the first sentence of paragraph 32 should say that HMG has striven to secure "progress in these negotiations and will continue to participate.....";
- b) the second sentence of paragraph 7, with its tribute to the CLMC, may need re-assessment nearer the time;
- c) at the beginning of paragraph 21 it may be tactful not to write off an "internal settlement" too bluntly: that - in the sense of being internal to the United Kingdom - is what Unionists want. How about, "any proposed settlement which addressed only "internal" relationships within Northern Ireland will not secure....."?

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- d) at the end of the first sentence of paragraph 27 you could perhaps work in the phrase about securing a fair hearing for those concerns.

2. More substantially, I am a little concerned that, overall, the message on the constitutional issue comes out somewhat blurred. The point has been extensively explored in recent minuting. The current draft starts with a good burst on consent and then registers various commitments to "good government" in Northern Ireland (paragraphs 11 to 13); the next section ("political and social realities") refers to the wider relationships but continues to concentrate on arrangements for "the governance of Northern Ireland". Paragraph 24, however, returns to language which is far more neutral on the constitutional question and which could unsettle Unionists. I know the first sentence is a quote from the Downing Street Declaration but I wonder if it would be better to use a paraphrase which, essentially, made clear that HMG's primary interest is to secure peace, stability and reconciliation in Northern Ireland on a basis which is widely acceptable in Northern Ireland and throughout the island of Ireland. Some of the language from the work done on "Future Options" (perhaps from the second formulation of HMG's position on the constitutional issue) might be used.

Signed

(signed)

J. HARTSTONE
CPL
26 AUGUST 1996
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