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LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY ~~THE~~ PRIME MINISTER

At my short meeting with you and ~~the~~ other Northern Ireland Party leaders on 23 January, you raised, on behalf of the Vice-Chancellor of the Queen's University, Belfast, the issue of cuts in university research funding over the next three years. I undertook to look into ~~the matter and to~~ <sup>this</sup> ~~write to you.~~

As you know, the Government is firmly committed to maintaining control of public expenditure so as to reduce borrowing and keep inflation low. Northern Ireland must therefore play its part in contributing to this.

In his statement of 10 December ~~1996~~ on the Public Expenditure Plans for Northern Ireland for the next three years, <sup>Sir</sup> Patrick Mayhew <sup>said</sup> ~~announced~~ that, in <sup>the</sup> light of renewed terrorist activity and public disorder, he had to restore Law and Order as the Government's top spending priority in Northern Ireland. <sup>Sir</sup> Patrick's statement made it clear that, <sup>given the</sup> ~~the~~ additional resources <sup>provided</sup> ~~were~~ for Law and Order inevitably meant ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> less resources ~~were available~~ for ~~other~~ <sup>general</sup> economic and social programmes. Difficult decisions therefore had to be taken about ~~those areas~~ where reductions should be made. <sup>Government's</sup> <sup>general</sup> <sup>commitment</sup> <sup>to</sup> <sup>controlling</sup> <sup>public</sup> <sup>expenditure.</sup>

<sup>On the</sup> ~~In regard to the funding allocated for Education in the~~ <sup>first,</sup> ~~Province,~~ it was decided that resources should be concentrated on schools - and the classroom in particular - <sup>and</sup> ~~so as~~ to maintain, as far as is possible, the real value of the existing schools' budget.

~~It is against this background that university research~~  
~~funding was one of the areas where it was reluctantly~~  
~~decided that reductions were necessary.~~ While I fully  
 recognise that any decision to reduce research funding to  
 the two Northern Ireland universities is unwelcome, I can  
 assure you that the decision was not taken lightly.

*reluctant*  
*use the to the decision*  
*should be*

The Northern Ireland Higher Education Council is currently  
 undertaking a review of the funding of university research  
 in Northern Ireland. ~~This review is due to be completed in~~  
~~the Spring of this year, and~~ *It* will provide an opportunity ~~for~~ *to*  
 the whole ~~question~~ *issue* of the ~~quantum~~ *amount* of university research *reconsider*  
 funding in Northern Ireland ~~to be reconsidered~~ for the 1997  
 Public Expenditure round.

I am copying this letter to the other NI political leaders  
 who attended our meeting.



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