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From the Principal Private Secretary

4 September 1997

*See Richard,*

### NORTHERN IRELAND: CONSENT AND DECOMMISSIONING

As anticipated the Taoiseach has now written to the Prime Minister about wording. It is a disappointingly negative response. There is no specific comments on the text we sent them, but all parts of it are by implication rejected, including even the passage on consent. On chairmanships, Ahern shows no sign of the interest in a compromise formula which he showed on the telephone. Paddy Teahon told me before the letter arrived that the Taoiseach had been working on it personally, but there are few signs of this, at least stylistically!

The Prime Minister has not yet seen the Taoiseach's letter, but he is likely to want to talk to the Taoiseach again before we go back with any further text (in which we may be able to include at least some of the points in the proposed new text attached to your letter of 3 September).

I am copying this, with the Taoiseach's letter, to John Grant (Foreign and Commonwealth Office), Jan Polley (Cabinet Office), Sir John Kerr (Washington) and Veronica Sutherland (Dublin).

*John*  
*Jan*

JOHN HOLMES

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*NS*