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Cole VLB

16/1/98

From the Principal Private Secretary

14 January 1998

Dec Ken,

JOHN HUME

It may be worth recording a brief exchange between the Prime Minister and John Hume on the way out of the Chamber today in the House of Commons, following Prime Minister's Questions. Hume was extremely positive about the latest developments in the peace process, and said that things were now really on track. The Prime Minister asked about Sinn Fein. Hume seemed unconcerned. He would find a way to sort them out. He was turning over in his head a formulation which involved acceptance that the real borders in Northern Ireland were no longer on the ground but in people's heads, and that these could be removed through constructive co-operation over a couple of generations. That would be far preferable to two more generations of violence pushing the communities further apart.

.. Hume also handed over to the Prime Minister the attached letter of invitation from the University of Notre Dame, asking the Prime Minister to speak and receive an honorary degree on 17 May. The Prime Minister will not be able to do this because of the G8 Summit, but I would be grateful for a nice draft reply.

I am copying this to Dominick Chilcott (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and Sir Christopher Meyer in Washington (by fax).

John

JOHN HOLMES

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Northern Ireland Office.

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