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285/1/16

Mr Kirk - BLIS

cc PS/SofS (B) - B
PS/Mr Stanley (L&B) - B
PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
Mr Burns
Mr Elliott - B
Mr Spence - B
Mr McConnell - B

PROPOSED SPEECH ON SINN FEIN

The Secretary of State has indicated that he would like at some future date to make a speech strongly critical of Sinn Fein. In the Secretary of State's words, it should take their position to pieces, emphasising the contradictions where possible.

2. Statistically, he would want to highlight the fact that in the whole of the island of Ireland less than 4% have voted in support of their policies (or rather nearly 97% of the voting electorate are opposed to them). Reference could also be made to the recent poll which suggested that a relatively low proportion of Roman Catholics actively wanted a united Ireland.

3. The Secretary of State has in mind at present no particular occasion for delivering such a speech; rather he would keep it on the stocks for use perhaps when required in the context of contact with Unionists or taking forward the declaration contained in the proposed Elections Bill.

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4. The Secretary of State would like to discuss the subject with officials. Without wishing to commission unnecessary work, I would suggest that it might be helpful if you could kindly prepare a synopsis of such a speech that could form the basis for a discussion. It does not look as though there will be a suitable slot in the Secretary of State's programme until the week beginning 29 June.

Signed:

R C MASEFIELD
PS/Secretary of State

19 June 1987

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DMC/3572

E. R.

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MR MASEFIELD

cc PS/SofS(B)-B
PS/Mr Stanley(L&B)-B
PS/Dr Mawhinney
(L&B)-M
PS/PUS (L&B)-B
PS/Mr Bloomfield-B
Mr Burns
Mr Elliott-M
Mr Innes-M
Mr Spence-B
Mr Chesterton
Mr McConnell PAB-M
Mr Blackwell-B
Mr G Hewitt-M
Mr Bell

PROPOSED SPEECH ON SINN FEIN

1. Thank you for your minute of 19 June (not to all). I attach some notes for a possible speech, as a basis for further consideration. The content and tone of such a speech might well be affected by the circumstances in which it is delivered, and in particular by a decision on whether to publish the proposed consultative document on a declaration of non-violence by election candidates. Further refinement of the material may also depend on the likely audience: a speech which would strike the right note in Great Britain (or America) could be attacked as "platitudinous" or "hypocritical" in Northern Ireland (particularly if no action could be reported on Sinn Fein councillors).

2. In restating Ministers' policy of not meeting or corresponding personally with Sinn Fein, it is important to make clear that our policy is based on Sinn Fein's support for violence, and not on any other factor. This is necessary in order to steer clear of the pitfalls presented by section 19 of the Constitution Act, which forbids discrimination on grounds of political opinion.

D C KIRK

CPL

3 July 1987

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OUTLINE SPEECH ON SINN FEIN

Sinn Fein's election manifesto called "For Freedom, Justice, Peace". All of us seek genuine peace, freedom and justice for Northern Ireland, just as we support those ideals elsewhere in the United Kingdom. But Sinn Fein prove by the action of their supporters that their use of these terms is at best hypocritical or cynical. Yet, while we may regard their actions as beneath contempt, we cannot afford to ignore them as a force in Northern Ireland politics.

"Peace" - Sinn Fein's support for violence

Rehearse Sinn Fein's expressions of support for violence, perhaps drawing on attached quotations [to be up-dated].

Relationship with PIRA

Leadership of SF is PIRA's political alter ego. SF shares PIRA's aims and objectives, and supports its methods. What is real PIRA/SF distinction? [Liaison Staff would be content to say that SF elected representatives are PIRA members, but this might make non-proscription more difficult to defend as would any suggestion that Sinn Fein/PIRA are a single organisation at every level.] Recent reminders of PIRA activity. Purpose of Sinn Fein is in practice to sustain and support terrorist campaign of the IRA and extend terrorist influence into the political life of NI. Sinn Fein members accept the Provisional Army Council as the Government of all-Ireland. Unambiguous support for the armed struggle.

"Freedom"

Objective in effect (like PIRA) is to create a united Ireland by force. Methods cause loathing and bitterness in unionist community, but also in nationalist community, most of whom support constitutional politics. Can reasonably ask what sort of united Ireland these people would create, if their methods inspire hatred north and south.

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Sinn Fein are entitled to their view that Ireland should be united. But the people of Northern Ireland have the freedom to choose, though the ballot box, just as the people of the Republic can freely choose their government. In recent general elections in whole of Ireland (which is the basis Sinn Fein would have us use) less than 3.3% of electorate voted for Sinn Fein. Almost 97% rejected them by voting for other parties, or by not voting at all. Let no-one be misled. A Belfast newspaper spoke for nationalists and unionists alike when it said "These people [PIRA do not kill for us. They do not kill for the Irish people and no mandate has been given to them in this island to do what they do".

Sinn Fein claim to act in the name of people of all Ireland. But apparent that majority of people in Ireland, North and South, have accepted the reality of the union. As Article 1 of the Agreement (to which both Governments are party) states, it is for majority of people of NI to determine their future status. They have freely made their views clear in successive general elections.

Justice

Sinn Fein protest that only they offer justice to the people of Northern Ireland. Justice is administered in Northern Ireland as it is in Great Britain, modified only to the extent made necessary by the terrorist campaign which Sinn Fein has supported. Their protestations about the administration of justice in Northern Ireland are thoroughly cynical.

So too are their professions of support for economic justice and for eg the MacBride Principles. What could be worse for the creation of jobs in Northern Ireland than bombings? What could be worse for economic growth than to discourage positively American investment?

The government is committed to justice in the field of employment equality [refer to consultation document]. What has Sinn Fein

contributed? Nothing. PIRA terrorism merely helps drive communities apart and stimulates tensions on which discrimination feeds.

1987 General Election result

In 1983 General Election Sinn Fein gained 102,701 votes. In the 1987 General Election (with, it is true, anti-personation measures in force), this fell by nearly 20,000 (18.8%) to 83,389. SF share of total vote fell from 13.4% to 11.42%. Its share of the nationalist vote fell from 42.8% in 1983 to 35.1% in 1987. SF's claims in 1983 that in due course they would overtake the SDLP and become the major nationalist party seem likely never to be fulfilled. (And, the minority community, according to a recent poll for UTV, only 22% support a united Ireland).

Government attitude to Sinn Fein

Abhor support for violence, which Sinn Fein stands for. Will have nothing to do with them (not write personally or meet; but ensure, in fairness, that constituents' complaints are properly dealt with). SF's hypocrisy profound; they operate democratic system whilst seeking to undermine it. Sit in Council chambers dealing with business of the community; but their PIRA collaborators murder policemen/soldiers (often part-time members of the community; may be Catholics) outside. Duty of Government, and all those opposed to Sinn Fein, to expose this contradiction at every opportunity. Sinn Fein masquerades as a constitutional party. Our job to tear that mask away; beneath it lies a gunman's hood.

The Government supports all those who by constitutional means oppose Sinn Fein's support for violence. Will not countenance Sinn Fein as a normal party. But recognise Sinn Fein's strategy. They wish to appear reasonable, constructive, good constituency workers; and thus to win propaganda advantage. Want to impress overseas audiences and to claim credit as a "liberation movement". Must bear this in mind in formulating response to Sinn Fein.

Should not forget the support Sinn Fein offers to and seeks from revolutionary marxist groups elsewhere. Regular readers of "Republican News" will find examples of such support [examples]. Much of this is hot air; SF seeks to gain credibility by association with revolutionary movements world-wide; SF's endorsement confers no credibility whatsoever on others.

Entirely wrong to use tactics in opposition to Sinn Fein which bring democratic process itself into disrepute; this gives positive advantage to Sinn Fein. The correct tactics are to uphold the value of the democratic process against Sinn Fein's manipulation of it. This means winning the argument against Sinn Fein in the democratic forum in which they participate; and exposing at every turn the real implications of their support for violence.

Proscription?

Some argue that SF should be proscribed. Government keeps matter under review. Important arguments of principle against. Government policy to prosecute persons in respect of substantive offences, not in respect of views they may hold. Not all of SF's membership may be involved with substantive offences. To proscribe Sinn Fein would come dangerously close to imposing criminal sanctions on people on account of their opinions, rather than their actions. SF represents views of a significant number of electors which would not be changed by proscription. Proscription could also be used for propaganda advantage by the Provisionals, eg SF might opt for confrontation with security forces, forcing mass arrests.

Declaration of non-violence by election candidates

[Depends on publication of consultative document.]

E. R.

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Approach we have adopted is the right one

Maintain dignity and cool in face of Sinn Fein provocations. Denounce hypocrisy; exploitation of democratic system; support for violence. Hammer these messages home, and keep on doing so. Seek to convince people by persuasion not to support Sinn Fein.

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