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Mr Chesterton
Mr J McConnell
Mr Masefield
Mr Hamilton
Mr Wood
Mr R E Templeton
Mr McCusker

Mr R B Spence

COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPEECH

Dr Mawhinney was grateful for your note of 29 January and the draft community relations speech which he intended to deliver today.

As the Minister discussed with you yesterday, he agrees that given current Anglo-Irish sensitivities the timing of the speech would not be right for this week.

The Minister would like the draft speech brought forward again in a few weeks for further consideration.

ROSALIND EARNSHAW
PS/Dr Mawhinney

3 February 1988

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BB 8459

E. R.

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cc. PS/SOS (B&L)
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Mr M Elliott
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Mr J McConnell
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PS/Dr Mawhinney (B&L) — M

COMMUNITY RELATIONS SPEECH

The Minister asked me to let him have for his weekend box a major community relations contribution for the speech which he will be making on 3 February.

Attached is a draft speech which seeks to incorporate as many as possible of the suggestions made on the draft which I circulated on 12 January. I should record that some people questioned the value of making such a speech, particularly if it sounded too like a sermon and lacked substance in policy terms. While the revised draft is, I hope, an improvement on the original effort, there must remain some doubts about the wisdom of making this sort of speech at a time when deep feelings in the minority community have been aroused by the Attorney-General's statement and the Birmingham 6 decision.

The Minister requested a short speech and he may feel that the attached draft is too long. Some pruning may be possible, but if we are to get on the public record a reasonable full statement of Government's position on community relations, something of this length is necessary. The Minister may want to consider delivering an abbreviated form of the speech whilst releasing the full text with the press release, a draft of which is also attached.

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Given current Anglo-Irish sensitivities, it would be prudent to let the Irish side of the Secretariat have an advance copy of the final version on the morning of 3 February.

RBS

R B SPENCE

Central Secretariat

29 January 1988

/JH

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DRAFT SPEECH BY DR MAWHINNEY ON COMMUNITY RELATIONS ISSUES

A visit to Enniskillen is perhaps a very appropriate occasion for me to say something about how Government's thinking in relation to community relations issues is developing.

Last September, the Secretary of State announced the creation of the Central Community Relations Unit to report directly to him on all aspects of relations between the two traditions in Northern Ireland. I chair a Steering Committee which guides the work of the Unit. Seeking to improve community relations in Northern Ireland is, I believe, one of the most difficult, sensitive and challenging tasks facing us today. It is a task which requires sustained action on several fronts over the coming months and years.

Over the recent months, the members of the Unit and I have been talking to a very wide range of individuals and organisations about the nature of the community relations problem in Northern Ireland. We have been seeking views and advice on how we might best proceed to tackle together the enormous challenge of improving relationships in the Northern Ireland community. I have been very impressed and encouraged by what I have learnt of the efforts of many brave and able people who in their working and private lives do everything possible to improve understanding and to minimise fears and suspicions. They deserve the support of everyone of goodwill in Northern Ireland.

There are, of course, those who argue that Northern Ireland's community relations problems cannot be solved without fundamental political or even constitutional

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changes. I accept, of course, the basic truth that community relations problems do not exist in a political vacuum. But I do not today want to get involved in political or constitutional issues except to say this: the need to tackle relationships between the people who live in this part of the island of Ireland will exist whatever constitutional ~~or political~~ developments do or do not take place. Communities such as those ^{West of the Bann,} in the Falls and the Shankill, the Bogside and the Waterside, Twinbrook and Dunmurry will have to live side by side irrespective of any constitutional or political framework. If we are to have genuine peace, the people in those communities must be given and must take the opportunity to live in peace and harmony; not surrendering their firmly accepted views and aspirations, but genuinely recognising and accepting differences so that fear of those on the other side can become a thing of the past.

There have been others to whom we have talked who have said that Government has embraced too eagerly the theory of two separate traditions in Northern Ireland. I accept that there is a danger of over-simplifying centuries of complex history and I acknowledge that the people who live in Northern Ireland share many things in common, including the wish for peace, ~~justice~~ and prosperity. However, it would be a grave error to underplay the very deep divisions in Northern Ireland between those of the Protestant/unionist/loyalist tradition and those of the Catholic/nationalist/republican tradition. The reality is that the great majority of our young people grow up in a segregated education system; in many areas of Northern Ireland, people live in strictly separate housing estates; there are deeply-rooted fears and suspicions as well as very different values and aspirations; tolerance, mutual respect and understanding are sadly absent in many minds.

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Against this background, what should be our approach to Northern Ireland's community relations problems? At one extreme, we could accept that little or nothing can be done now or in the immediate future about the divisions in Northern Ireland; we could plan to live with those divisions; indeed greater voluntary separation may have to be accepted. The other extreme approach would be to mount a major assault on the existing divisions, particularly in education and housing; every opportunity could be taken to push forward towards a fully integrated society, using compulsion and the power of Government to enforce integration in certain areas as happened in the US Civil Rights campaign of the 1960s.

I suggest ~~to you~~ that both approaches are ill-conceived and dangerous. The adoption of either would only add to the problems. The right approach is surely the one which the Secretary of State outlined in his speech on 8 September:

"We have to find the means to live together with a sense of community, not merely alongside each other, but amongst each other".

Let me set out three basic requirements which, I believe, must be met if the people from the two traditions are to live peacefully together in Northern Ireland.

First, the two traditions must live together in society as equal partners. There cannot be first and second-class citizens. There must be equality of opportunity, equity of treatment and an end to all forms of discrimination ~~and injustice~~. Enormous progress has been made over the last two decades in tackling the legitimate grievances of the minority tradition, (particularly in housing) and in ensuring generally equity of

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treatment by public bodies. Further action is needed in some areas, however, and the Government has recognised the importance to community relations of making further progress in the field of equality of opportunity in employment. Government has already signalled its firm commitment to this task ~~and will shortly be bringing forward significant new proposals.~~ *in the proposals published recently.*

It is crucial that people throughout the whole community are treated fairly. Fairness ~~and justice~~ must not only be put into practice but must be recognised and accepted by all as ^a the basic principles on which society must operate. Action to ensure fairness, equity and equality of opportunity must never be interpreted by political leaders or ordinary people as a victory for one side or the other. A healthy society abides by these principles and denounces any departures from them irrespective of where and how they occur.

[Government is firmly committed to promoting equity and equality of opportunity, even if this is perceived by one community as producing a worsening of its current position in the short-term. Ensuring and developing equitable policies will never be easy in a divided community, but it is fundamental and Government is determined to see it through.]

The second basic requirement for improved community relations is respect for genuine and deeply-held differences. The validity of the aspirations and values of each tradition must be acknowledged. Tolerance and mutual understanding must, therefore, be fostered at all possible levels and violence (or the threat of violence) must not be used to further or to defend the position of one tradition against the other.

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All this poses some very difficult questions about the future of the NI community. Respect for, and acceptance of differences must be handled in a way which does not diminish or threaten the rights of the other side or which suggests that improving community relations means undermining cultural differences. We may, however, have to question how far we wish to go in accepting the existence of two traditions and in allowing greater separateness to develop. We need to acknowledge that greater contact, knowledge and understanding between the two traditions will not necessarily diminish separateness. We will sometimes have to face circumstances in which the wider interests of the whole community have to take precedence over the wishes of one tradition. These are awkward questions and there are no easy answers. But I can declare my basic preference for seeking, wherever possible, to enable the two traditions to enrich each other rather than to encourage them to develop separately or in parallel.

The third basic requirement for improved community relations is, I suggest, action to remove the barriers to closer contact between the two traditions and action to build on common ground which the two traditions share. Much has already been achieved in cross-community activities of many kinds, including in the schools and youth service. It involves also constant vigilance against creation of new barriers, including action which may underline, cement or emphasise separateness. But we have to be realistic; people can not be forced to live in the same area if they are genuinely afraid to do so; children cannot be made to attend schools in a system of education which is against the wishes of their parents. On the other hand, we can, I believe, take more positive action to support those who do want to break down the barriers and I will shortly be making an important initiative in this direction in the education field.

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In moving towards better community relations, Government has, of course, a major responsibility - in promoting policies and legislation which ensure justice, fairness and equality, in encouraging closer contact between the two traditions, in fostering tolerance and understanding, in constantly reviewing existing policies and programmes to ensure that the impact on community relations is properly understood and given the fullest consideration. The new Community Relations Unit is now playing a central role in taking forward action on these matters within Government, and in particular will be developing arrangements to enable Government to monitor and audit the impact of its range of policies on the two traditions and the relationship between them.

But the responsibility extends well beyond Government. It rests heavily on Northern Ireland's elected representatives - MPs and District Councillors - who must contribute positively to debate and resolution of these issues, rather than simply promoting or defending their own tradition. It extends also to employers and trade unions, to major professional bodies, to the churches, to the whole of the education system, to the voluntary sector and to local community bodies of all kinds. Above all perhaps, this responsibility extends to the individual citizen. Everyone needs to think twice about their attitudes to the other side, to avoid knee-jerk reactions which condemn whole communities for the actual or perceived actions of individuals. Every member of this society has to take care that in thought, word and deed, he or she does not contribute to the total sum of hatred and distrust which exists in Northern Ireland.

If the people of Northern Ireland want a peaceful and prosperous future, they need to work - at all possible levels - to achieve a more confident and constructive relationship between the different parts of the community. In the words of the Secretary of State's 8 September speech -

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"It is surely time after over 2500 deaths for everyone in Northern Ireland to reject the "them and us" mentality and to recognise that the only sensible future rests on learning to live together".

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