



NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

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SPEECH BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND, RT HON TOM KING MP, TO
THE LOS ANGELES WORLD AFFAIRS COUNCIL

"NORTHERN IRELAND: WORKING TOGETHER"

The purpose of the British Government, ever since it took direct responsibility for affairs in Northern Ireland, has been to create a more prosperous and fair society and a better future for all the people. More prosperous it must be, as there can be no sure future where too many people have never had a job nor felt that they would ever get one. More fair it must be also, as we could not tolerate any part of the United Kingdom where there was discrimination, whether in housing, electoral arrangements, or jobs.

What progress, then, are we making to these objectives? If you ask Americans what impression they have of Northern Ireland, the majority would say "violence". When Northern Ireland is in the headlines, it is usually in relation to some terrorist outrage, or some sectarian dispute. Very little is seen of all the other facets that make up life there, the substantial improvement in the economy, the fall in unemployment, the vast amount of new housing that has done so much to eliminate the old complaints of discrimination. Nor does it show the tremendous efforts of so many good people who are determined to work for a better future for them and their families and for better relations between the two communities.

Of course there have been terrorist outrages, perpetrated mainly by the IRA, but also by the extremist loyalist groups. These have caused great suffering and

sadness to many people and particularly recently to a number of civilians, families, elderly people, schoolchildren, killed and maimed in terrorist attacks that went wrong.

It is because I see and hear for myself so much of the suffering that is caused, that I have so little sympathy for those who still don't realise how evil and vicious the terrorists are. Some are still under the illusion that they are part of some decent Irish republican tradition, instead of the evil impostors who are trying to exploit that old loyalty. Many in America have sadly not yet appreciated this. I can tell you there is nobody in the island of Ireland, whether in Northern Ireland or the Irish Republic, who is ignorant of what they really represent. That is why the British and Irish Governments are working so closely together to defeat this evil of terrorism which has caused such misery north and south of the border. You do not, in a civilised community, kill and destroy to make a political point, and no Government can afford to let violence win. That is the point that, 20 years on and 2500 deaths later the terrorists have still not understood. No society will let a smaller minority impose their will on the majority by violence and terror. For 20 years they have not and they never will and no amount of shouting 'Our day will Come' makes the slightest difference. It has not and it never will. The godfathers who pedal this deceit never tell the new recruits that the only day that counts is the day of their funeral when the godfathers carry their coffins. These are the parasites who prey on their own people. And this is in a democratic society where constitutional, political channels exist to address real grievances.

At the core of the co-operation between the British and Irish Governments is the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Under this Agreement the two Governments jointly agree that the status of Northern Ireland shall be determined by the democratic principle of free consent of the people living in Northern Ireland. This recognises the rights of the majority, but it also makes clear that the interests of the minority shall be properly respected as well. Under it the Irish Government is able to put forward views and proposals on behalf of the minority, and we meet regularly in Conferences to discuss issues of concern and to seek to resolve any difficulties between us. We are jointly committed to fight together to defeat terrorism, to encourage tolerance and understanding between the two major traditions, and to work together in economic and social fields where it makes sense to do so.

All this is poison to the terrorists who seek to smash any co-operation between our countries, and who see in continuing distrust and hatred the best chance for

their evil plans to succeed. We have to stand very firm against such threats, made all the more vicious by the substantial supply of weapons and Semtex explosive that Colonel Gaddafi of Libya has provided to the IRA, and by the recent efforts of Protestant extremists to enlarge their arsenal as well. In facing this vicious threat the security forces on both sides of the border have shown great courage and commitment, in frustrating terrorist attacks and steadily recovering more and more arms and explosives.

But while security inevitably attracts immediate attention, the real task is to tackle the fundamental issues for a better future for Northern Ireland. There is no quick trick solution to achieve that, but steady progress is being made. I spoke about jobs and I am happy to say that employment is increasing. Three years ago unemployment was 22%, it is now less than 16% and falling. Substantial new investment is taking place with the strong growth of the UK economy, and the exciting prospect of the larger European market as 1992 approaches.

Traditionally, the richest source of investment from outside the UK has been the United States, and today more than 25 American companies - including major multinationals like Ford, United Technologies, Du Pont, Hyster, McDonnell Douglas and AVX - employ around 11,000 local people. Over the last five years, US companies have invested some \$0.5 billion in Northern Ireland, involving thousands of new jobs. The fact that US companies are prepared to invest - and re-invest - and to purchase in Northern Ireland as Boeing do substantially, demonstrates they know there is good business to be done in the Province and that they have confidence in its future.

Nor has the constructive role of US companies been limited simply to their own investments. Fords have been instrumental in encouraging a major new investment on the edge of West Belfast by Montupet, a leading French car component company which will produce more than a thousand new jobs where they are desperately needed. This one act by Fords has done more for the employment prospects of the minority community in Northern Ireland than political campaigns such as MacBride, which have not produced a single job but instead threatened disinvestment.

Nor are these investments purely philanthropic. What they recognise is that Northern Ireland is now probably the most profitable location of all for investment within Europe.

These companies have recognised the unique advantages of a young, well educated,

highly-motivated workforce, with the best industrial relations record in the UK; a top quality industrial infrastructure; first class research facilities in its two universities; and the most flexible package of financial incentives in Europe. No US company considering investment in Europe can afford to ignore Northern Ireland: it is an ideal base from which to meet the challenge of 1992, which is the date set for the creation of the single European Market, offering access to 320 million potential consumers.

And if we can get more jobs, then that gives us the best possible chance to achieve our great aim of fairness in employment and an end to discrimination. We are determined that everybody in Northern Ireland should have equal opportunities for jobs. To that end there is a Bill currently going through the British Parliament which requires not just the avoidance of discrimination - that is already illegal - but the active and continuous practice of employment equality. It does so by providing for compulsory monitoring by employers; compulsory review of their training; promotion and recruitment practices: the taking of affirmative action measures, including the setting of goals and timetables; it also includes both criminal offences for those who do not comply, and economic sanctions - by denying grants and public sector business; and it sets stiff monetary penalties for bad practice - the new Tribunal can fine an employer more than \$50,000.

This bill confirms the Government's commitment on fair employment. It has Mrs Thatcher's personal and strong support, and has been welcomed by the Irish Government. It is geared to the local circumstances of Northern Ireland, and we are convinced that it will help us make substantial and lasting progress towards the removal of unfairness and injustice.

Urban Regeneration

Community Relations

The encouragement of better community relations is also an essential part of Government policy. We are now paying special attention to the community relations impact of all aspects of Government policy: over \$5 million is spent annually on community relations projects. A cross-community contact scheme for schools

and youth clubs has been resoundingly successful: about 340 schools and 200 youth clubs have applied for support for joint history and environmental projects, and to meet this demand we have substantially increased the funds available.

The education system has an important role to play in trying to heal the divisions in the community. Although two separate schooling systems currently co-exist, not as a result of Government legislation, but as a consequence of past developments, there is a growing interest in integrated education in Northern Ireland. We have decided that forthcoming education legislation should include a statutory duty on Government actively to promote it: we are not going to force integrated education on anyone who does not want it, but we will ensure that parents who want their children to be educated along with others of a different religious belief have the opportunity to do so.

We are now funding new measures to increase appreciation of the different cultural traditions in Northern Ireland. There can be a tendency in Northern Ireland to consider certain cultural items like music, the Irish language, or specific historical events, as the "property" of one or other part of the community. The Government's aim is to break down barriers, and to encourage greater understanding and contact between the two traditions. In schools, we want to see a common awareness of historical events, looked at from an objective and non-partisan viewpoint, and the forthcoming education legislation will make provision for that. Last month also saw the launch of a new effort to explore how best to tackle cultural diversity in Northern Ireland, with a major conference on the subject attended by a whole range of people from academics and poets to community activists - and with generous support from the American Ireland Fund. The main message we want to emphasise is that differences need not lead to division: handled constructively and confidently, they can strengthen and enrich a society, as all Americans know.

Urban Regeneration

The regeneration of disadvantaged urban areas, like the drive for inward investment, is a key priority in the Government's economic programme. We are determined to tackle the specific problems of people in these areas, and secure improved prospects for those living there.

In Belfast, July 1988 saw the launching of the "Making Belfast Work" initiative, with an extra \$110 million being allocated, on top of existing programmes, to

help new business, training, education, health, the environment and community services. The first programme includes 72 projects, with the majority being community based, in order to ensure the involvement of local people in improving their conditions. The initiative has been widely welcomed by all.

Examples of the projects supported last year include: a new adult education centre in mainly Catholic West Belfast, with over 1,000 students already enrolled; purchase of factory premises by the West Belfast Enterprise Board with public funds to create many new jobs by this autumn; and grants to 44 local community groups to help improve local conditions. This type of activity produces results where it really matters: on the ground, and allows local people to feel they do have a degree of control over their own destiny.

A similar initiative is underway to speed up the regeneration of Londonderry, which is the second city in the North and predominantly Catholic. Additional funds have been allocated this year on top of existing, very substantial, mainstream programmes, and some 400 public sector jobs have been identified as suitable for relocation to the city. A joint study of the longer-term development needs of the North-West region as a whole is currently being undertaken in partnership with the Irish Government, and with the support of the European Community.

International Fund

Alongside the Government's efforts, the International Fund for Ireland is also playing an important role. The Fund was established in December 1986, following the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It has been the recipient of a very generous US contribution, amounting to \$120 million to date, with a further \$10 million promised for Fiscal Year 1989. Contributions have also been received from Canada, New Zealand, and the European Community, which has promised donations of about \$50 million over 3 years.

The Fund gives priority to projects located in disadvantaged areas, and of the 1,000 projects supported to date, which have created around 4,500 new full-time jobs, some two-thirds are located within these areas. Typical projects include: 2 major urban regeneration projects in West Belfast, sponsored by local community groups, which will receive support of \$7 million; assistance for the development of Eglinton Airport near Londonderry, and assistance for a major trade promotion in Boston being undertaken by Londonderry and Galway in a joint venture. Just under 70% of the money allocated by the Fund to Northern Ireland has gone to the

most disadvantaged areas.

Political Development

As well as getting economic improvement we want to see political development as well. The Government wants to see a society in which the two sides of the community can live together in peace and prosperity, with local politicians playing a full role in the business of Government. Very recently there have been new signs that political discussions might be possible, and that some politicians on each side wanted to start talking to each other about durable political structures for Northern Ireland.

This year we have ourselves started a series of discussions to explore the parties' present position and to encourage a positive approach from all. The crucial issue, I believe, is not to focus on differences, because those are already well known and all too well rehearsed, but rather to concentrate on areas of common concern (in, for example, economic and industrial development, health, education and housing). These bread-and-butter issues are as important to the people of Northern Ireland as the larger issues of the constitution and political structures and can be taken forward by the politicians of Northern Ireland without prejudicing their position on these larger issues in any way.

The Government's policy is to involve people in Northern Ireland in a greater responsibility for their own affairs on a basis that can work with reasonable acceptance by both parts of the community. The Anglo-Irish Agreement reaffirmed this policy, and it also confirmed that the Irish Government supported that policy. We stand ready to consider any proposals that are put to us, but the crucial factor is the will of politicians and their electors to make progress.

US Involvement

As I said at the beginning, the Government is determined to ensure that the terrorists will not win. But we are equally determined to deliver a more prosperous economic future for all the people of Northern Ireland to improve community relations, generate more jobs, increase mutual understanding, encourage local initiative, foster political dialogue, enhance equality of opportunity; our aim is to create a society of which the people of Northern Ireland can be proud, and in which their children can grow up in peace and prosperity. Having listened to me with such patience, you may now be asking yourselves whether there is anything

more that the USA can do to help.

Well, of course, as I mentioned earlier, US companies in Northern Ireland are already doing a tremendous amount. US markets are very important to Northern Ireland trade: US investment has brought many jobs.

There are also, of course, several aid organisations based in the USA which have done sterling work in helping the cause of peace and reconciliation in Northern Ireland, and are a tribute to the generosity of the American people. These organisations should not be confused with bodies such as the Irish Northern Aid Committee or NORAIID, which is a registered agent of the IRA. Money given to NORAIID will eventually help to manufacture bombs to destroy innocent lives: money given to legitimate aid organisations will generate hope for the future. And of course NORAIID is one of the groups who are actively using the MacBride campaign to create pressures and additional burdens, that discourage further US companies from investing in Northern Ireland.

The greatest single contribution that could be made to bring genuine help to both communities in Northern Ireland is not to pillory or attack US companies in Northern Ireland but to help in a constructive way to encourage more investment and jobs in an area that desperately needs them.

And what Northern Ireland needs as well is understanding and well-informed comment. There is no country in the world which shows greater concern and interest for Irish matters and the problems of Northern Ireland. There are few countries in the world where there is so much unwillingness among some parts of the community to understand the true situation. And no country with such potential to help the people of Northern Ireland help themselves. It is on ignorance that evil influences will play, and support causes that do great damage to the whole island of Ireland. The British and Irish and American Governments are united together in our efforts to defeat such evil, and to bring at last a better future for all the people in Northern Ireland and throughout the island of Ireland.