



## NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

17 January 1986

STATEMENT BY MR NICHOLAS SCOTT MP PARLIAMENTARY UNDER SECRETARY OF STATE AT THE  
NIO

There was no future for the people of Northern Ireland in turning the Province into a "never never land", a course on which some political leaders seemed hell-bent, Mr Scott said in a statement today.

Mr Scott said: "What is needed in Northern Ireland is, not a dogged determination to hold entrenched positions without regard for the consequences, but rather an increased willingness to see and respect other points of view and to work together for the good of all the people of the Province".

"It was the overwhelming view of the two sovereign Governments in these islands that the Anglo-Irish Agreement provided the best framework within which real advances could be made in helping the various political elements to work together. That Agreement was now firmly in place and would remain so. It had been overwhelmingly supported by both Houses of Parliament and was widely perceived in the United Kingdom as a whole as a practical way of pursuing peace and stability.

"The unionists have said 'no' to the Agreement. But do they really mean 'no' to the recognition by both Governments of the status of Northern Ireland? Do they really mean 'no' to increased practical co-operation between the two Governments, especially in areas such as the fight against terrorism?

"They are presumably saying 'no' only to the means devised to ensure that the voice and the interests of the minority community can be heard.

"But unionists cannot go on simply saying 'no' - they must, in their own interests and for the sake of the whole Province, say 'yes' to something which will work positively towards achieving reconciliation and stability between all those who believe in the path of peace and reconciliation.

"Surely there could not be a better moment for them to do so. Never before has there been such a clear commitment by the Government of the Republic of Ireland to recognition of the status of Northern Ireland; to the principle of consent; to increased co-operation on security; to the achievement of devolved Government within Northern Ireland.

"These assurances achieved, unionists should now feel in a strong position to say 'yes' and to involve themselves in constructive discussion of ways of achieving devolution, with all shades of opinion.

"They will hardly have missed the important point that if devolved administration were achieved for Northern Ireland then the role of the Intergovernmental Conference would be correspondingly reduced. In that sense the solution to one of their main complaints lies largely in their own hands.

"But while the Government's view was that real progress could only come from within Northern Ireland it did not lie with the unionists alone to search their conscience.

"The Agreement and the Conference were established, in the absence of any other means, to redress imbalance within the Northern Ireland community and to afford a way of hearing and recognising the nationalist viewpoint.

"This places a very clear onus on constitutional nationalists. They must now come forward in a spirit of co-operation and demonstrate to the majority that they too have a real interest in making progress within the Northern Ireland context. In particular they must co-operate in the search for ways of achieving devolved administration, within the spirit and guidelines of the Agreement. And it would be of great help to the security forces in their untiring efforts to impartially uphold law and order, if they had the declared and unequivocal support of the nationalist section of the community.

"Let us hope that 1986 will be remembered not for its destructive and tragic beginning in Armagh but for the emergence of a new spirit between all those who condemn violence so that together we can rebuild peace, stability and prosperity in Northern Ireland."