

PRIME MINISTER'S RESPONSE TO QUESTION FROM ANDREW HUNTER MP  
28 November 1996

Prime Minister: "There has been a great deal of rumour and disinformation on this issue in recent weeks. The Government have had a number of exchanges with the Honorable member for Foyle and others about the possibility for a new IRA ceasefire. We have made it absolutely clear throughout these exchanges that IRA Sinn Fein should give up violence once and for all and committ themselves to exclusively peaceful means. We have also made it clear that we cannot, and will not, change our policy to bargain for a ceasefire. In order that this should be absolutely clear we are publishing today a statement of our policy which we sent to the Honorable member for Foyle last weekend. A copy is being placed in the library together with a short explanatory statement.

"Madam speaker, the Talks that have been carrying on for some time are likely to break for Christmas soon and to resume later in January. When Sinn Fein can join the Talks depends upon their own actions. Madam speaker ...

- INTERRUPTION - HECKLING FROM LABOUR BACK BENCHES - SILENCED BY SPEAKER -

"...this is a matter of great interest to people not just in Northern Ireland but everywhere. When Sinn Fein should join the Talks depends upon their own actions. We need to see an unequivocal restoration of the ceasefire; we need to be able to make a credible judgement that it is lasting; we need to know that they will sign up for the Mitchell Principles. These matters are in Sinn Fein's hands. Madam speaker, we wish to see inclusive Talks involving all Parties as soon as possible, but if Sinn Fein continue to exclude themselves the Talks must and they will go on without them."