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FROM: D BROOKER  
CPL DIVISION  
10 JANUARY 1994

DESK IMMEDIATE

cc: PS/Secretary of State (B)	-B
PS/Michael Ancram (L&B)	-B
PS/PUS (L&B)	-B
PS/Mr Fell	-B
Mr Thomas	-B
Mr Bell	-B
Mr Watkins	-B
Mr Williams	-B
Mr Daniell	-B
Mr Maccabe	-B
Mr Caine	-B
Mrs Wilsdon	-B

✓ cc M. Rodell  
M. Beeton

2 Preben to me  
1/11

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L) -B

NORTHERN IRELAND SELECT COMMITTEE

Thank you for your minute of earlier today.

2. When I have discussed the timetable for setting up the Committee with Mr McLean in the past we have both taken the view that, unless the political imperatatives required a shorter timescale, the consultations with the political parties and tabling of the new Standing Orders could move forward at a comfortable pace. We would certainly not drag our feet but, at the same time, once the UUP were confident that events were moving in the right direction, there would be no particular need to rush. There will be sensitivities over the negotiations with the parties, which could have a bearing on the wider political scene in Northern Ireland, and this too might have an effect on the pace of process.

3. I spoke to Mr McLean again, after I had seen your minute. He explained that the Chief Whip does not have any particular reason for suggesting that we should press on with this in the next week; he just wondered whether that is what we would want. Mr Ryder would be equally happy if we would prefer to defer a start on the consultations until the end of the month or early February.

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4. My own view is that this is the correct course. Ministers are not under any pressure to implement the Committee quickly and, in some respects, it gives us a lien over the UUP so long as the process is running on. Just as importantly I do not think that we would want to upset the Irish Government, SDLP or Labour Party at this sensitive time, when the Joint Declaration has successfully thrown the spotlight on Sinn Fein. We do not want to give any of these three a pretext for criticising the Government or to hand Mr Adams fresh ammunition for his allegation that the Government is more interested in its own survival than dealing with the problems of Northern Ireland.

7. To my mind, therefore, the Chief Whip should sit tight for the time being. At most he might, in the course of normal contacts with the other parties, put them on notice that he will be consulting them about the Committee in the coming weeks, while leaving the actual dates open. It would then be helpful if Mr McLean could consult us again before the Chief Whip arranges the meetings.

8. It was most useful that you reminded Mr McLean of our position on the possible composition of the Committee. As you said, our suggestion of a total complement of 15 was postulated on the basis that it would be useful to give the SDLP 2 seats, to make the Committee a more attractive proposition to them. Mr McLean was thinking instead of giving an extra seat to the Conservatives and Labour Party. Our anxiety to facilitate the SDLP might, in fact, have been misplaced. Although John Hume has been decidedly cool on the idea of a Committee, Joe Hendron gave an interview on 17 December in which he said that the Committee was going to be a fact of life and so "I see no reason why the political parties in Northern Ireland, including the SDLP, should not participate in it". On composition he noted that Select Committees are "supposed to reflect the strength of the parties at Westminster" and assumed that there would be 2 UUP, 1 DUP and 1 SDLP on it. This cannot be taken as a definitive description of the SDLP's position but it

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suggests that they expect to be given only one seat and are prepared to live with it. I have mentioned this to Mr McLean, whom I will be meeting later in the week to discuss the detail of the ground work which we need to cover as we work towards setting up the Committee.

10 DOWNING STREET  
LONDON SW1A 1AA

signed DB

PS / 905 / L+B

30 January 1954

PS / Mr. ...

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D BROOKER  
OAB Ext 6591

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Thank you for your letter of 30 December, and for your kind wishes for ... I warmly reciprocate these. Thank you, too, for your generous words regarding my adoption of the Joint Declaration. In my turn, I warmly acknowledge the significance and statesmanship of your explicit recognition, in particular, of Unionist fears and perceptions.

With you, I have found the width of the warm public response to the Declaration encouraging, and although the actions of the Provisional IRA since the ending of their Christmas cease-fire have been inexorably murderous, and anonymously costly in their consequences, the restraint of our own reaction has reflected an understanding of the delicate psychology involved in the exercise in which both our Governments are engaged.

We must guard against arbitrary deadlines but you will readily understand the limit of what is possible for us to tolerate, as the stage of keeping the door open, is now being approached. Only by a combination of tact and professionalism have the security forces, and also civilians, been spared further ... We cannot count on this continuing. For our part we shall, as long as it is practicable, continue to be measured in our ... to further attempts to

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