

17

FROM: TONY BEETON
TPU
6 JANUARY 1994

- cc Mr Bell - B
- Mr Wood (L&B) - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Dodds - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Marsh - B
- Mr Stephens (personal) - B
- Mr Bramley
- Mr Margetts
- Mr Rodell
- Mr West
- Mr Gibbons
- Mrs Herrick

MR DANIELL

JOINT DECLARATION ETC - STOCK PARAGRAPHS FOR MINISTER'S CASES

The very large number of Minister's cases (and, of course, treat officials) which we have received about the documentary exchanges with the IRA and the Joint Declaration shows little sign of abating - at least for the present. I have, therefore, prepared the attached stock paragraphs to be drawn on when framing replies to individual cases. I should emphasise that this is not intended to replace taking proper note of the content of individual letters and framing replies accordingly, although it should help to simplify the process. In fact, many of the cases will require little or no deviation from these standard paragraphs anyway.

2. I have given this minute and its attachment a distribution outside SIL/TPU and recipients should feel free to draw on these paragraphs as appropriate in their own Minister's cases.

(signed)

TONY BEETON
TALKS PLANNING UNIT
6 JANUARY 1994
(X 6564 OAB)

RN/SIL/22563

STOCK PARAGRAPHS FOR MINISTERS' CASES ON 'PEACE' ETC.
- to be drawn on/added to for individual replies

1. The Government had a clear duty to respond to the message from the IRA [in February 1993] that 'the conflict is over but we need your advice on how to bring it to a close.' In [my] Statement to the House of Commons on 29 November 1993 [I] put on the public record a complete account of the exchanges which took place through a channel of communication between the Government and the IRA. The responses to messages from the IRA spelt out the Government's consistent, publicly stated position. There was then, and there is now, no question of HMG engaging in negotiations with anyone who uses, supports or threatens violence to advance their political objectives.
2. In their Joint Declaration on 15 December 1993 the PM and Taoiseach reaffirmed the constitutional principles and political realities which safeguard the vital interests of all sections of the community in NI. The Declaration reiterates NI's statutory constitutional guarantee and reaffirms that the British Government will uphold the democratic wishes of a greater number of the people of Northern Ireland whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland.
3. The Declaration complements and underpins the Talks process and the search for a comprehensive political settlement. [Only democratically mandated parties, committed exclusively to peaceful methods will have a place at the conference table.] [It] [The Declaration] provides an opportunity for Sinn Fein and the IRA to renounce violence, and, after a period to show that it has come to a permanent end, for Sinn Fein to join [legitimate constitutional dialogue] [exploratory dialogue with the Government]. The onus is clearly on all those who use or support violence to stop it now, and stop it for good.
4. As for the question of an amnesty for terrorists there can be no misunderstanding. The Criminal Law will continue to apply. Those convicted of crimes before the courts must expect to serve out their sentences.
5. I am most grateful for your support which is characteristic of the many letters we have received from people who hope for and are committed to the search for a secure peace and an enduring political settlement in NI.
6. I enclose a copy of the Joint Declaration [made by the PM and the Irish Taoiseach at Downing Street on 15 December 1993] which I trust will be of interest to you.