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*Dear Mark,*

**PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH ANDREW HUNTER**

Thank you for your letter of 10 December 1993 requesting a short note on points the Prime Minister might make at his meeting with Andrew Hunter, Chairman of the Conservative Backbench Northern Ireland Committee on Thursday 16 December.

Mr Hunter will be coming to the meeting fresh from his re-election, I understand by an overwhelming margin, as Chairman of the Backbench Committee last Thursday. He saw off a challenge by Mr Peter Temple-Morris, Co-Chairman of the British-Irish Parliamentary Body.

There are 3 possible main issues which Mr Hunter might raise with the Prime Minister. The least likely, I believe, was his request for advice about reactivating his contacts with Sinn Fein back in ~~June~~ <sup>May</sup>. A copy of the correspondence on this is attached.

The making public of the messages between the Government and Sinn Fein has not changed our basic position that, apart from local matters and constituency issues, Ministers and Government officials will not undertake direct or indirect contact with elected Sinn Fein representatives and that others considering whether to talk to Sinn Fein or the IRA must make that decision for themselves.



The second issue likely to arise is Mr Hunter's desire for reassurance on the status of Northern Ireland, and his view that the Prime Minister and Secretary of State should not only support the constitutional guarantee, but should express a preference for Northern Ireland remaining in the Union. He raised the status of Northern Ireland during the Statement today. I think that the Prime Minister already has sufficient briefing to cover this issue, but the key point is that the Government has reaffirmed that they will uphold the democratic wish of "a greater number" to the people of Northern Ireland on the issue of whether they prefer to support the Union or a sovereign united Ireland, and that the Taoiseach has accepted that the democratic right of self-determination of the people of Ireland as a whole must be achieved and exercised with and subject to the agreement in consent of a majority of the people of Northern Ireland.

Finally, Andrew Hunter may raise the question of the Select Committee. He is very much behind Mr Molyneaux in seeking this. The Prime Minister may like to use the lines to take on this subject are given in that attached annex.

Yours sincerely,

SIMON ROGERS