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FOR M HENNESSY FROM BURKE.

OPENING STATEMENT BY SDLP LEADER GERRY FITT.

THE HOPES AND ASPIRATIONS OF MANY PEOPLE WHO LONG THE LASTING PEACE IN IRELAND ARE WITH US AT THIS CONFERENCE TODAY. THE TALKS WERE RECENTLY COMPLETED IN BELFAST AND WHICH LED TO THE FORMATION OF AN EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND OPENING ON A MUCH LESS HOPEFUL ATMOSPHERE. YES, THEY WERE SUCCESSFUL, THEY WERE CONDUCTED BY THE PARTIES PARTICIPATING IN A GENUINE SPIRIT OF GOODWILL AND MUTUAL RESPECT. IT WOULD BE OUR WISH THAT THIS CONFERENCE SHOULD BE CONDUCTED IN A SIMILAR SPIRIT.

ALREADY A LARGE MEASURE OF AGREEMENT EXISTS ON THE ISSUES WHICH WILL FORM THE MAJOR PART OF OUR AGENDA. THE FOLLOWING PROPOSITIONS HAVE ALREADY BEEN AGREED BETWEEN HMG AND PARTIES WHICH FORM THE EXECUTIVE DESIGNATE -

1. THAT THERE SHALL BE A COUNCIL OF IRELAND,
2. THAT THE COUNCIL SHOULD BE CONFINED TO THE NORTH AND SOUTH OF IRELAND,
3. THAT THE COUNCIL SHALL CONSIST NOT ONLY OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC AND THE N I EXECUTIVE BUT ALSO ON A SEPARATE ADVISORY AND CONSULTATIVE LEVEL, OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PARTIES IN DAIL EIREANN AND THE N I ASSEMBLY,
4. THAT THE COUNCIL SHALL HAVE ITS OWN SECRETARIAT,
5. THAT THE COUNCIL SHALL HAVE EXECUTIVE AND HARMONISATION FUNCTIONS AS WELL AS A CONSULTATIVE ROLE,
6. THAT THE COUNCIL AT GOVERNMENT LEVEL SHOULD OPERATE ON THE BASIS OF UNANIMITY.

IF THESE PRINCIPLES ARE ACCEPTABLE TO THE GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND THEN IT WOULD BE FOR THIS CONFERENCE TO WORK OUT THE DETAILED IMPLEMENTATION OF THEM.

THERE ARE SOME OTHER QUESTIONS.

IT IS ALSO BROADLY ACCEPTED THAT THE TWO PARTS OF IRELAND ARE TO A CONSIDERABLE EXTENT INTER-DEPENDENT IN THE WHOLE FIELD OF SECURITY AND IT IS CLEARLY EVIDENT THAT THE PROBLEM OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN N-I CANNOT BE SOLVED WITHOUT THE ACTIVE INVOLVEMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF IRELAND. THE WHOLE FIELD OF LAW AND ORDER, INCLUDING POLICING ARRANGEMENTS AND COMMON LAW ENFORCEMENT IS AN AREA WHERE, AS THE PARTIES TO THE BELFAST CONFERENCE AGREED, THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND MIGHT PLAY A USEFUL ROLE.

WE HAVE CONSISTENTLY ARGUED THAT A SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM OF POLICING IS ESSENTIAL TO ANY SETTLEMENT OF THE PROBLEMS OF N I NOT ONLY WITH REGARD TO THE IMMEDIATE PROBLEM OF HAVING EFFECTIVE POLICY THROUGHOUT N I BUT ALSO TO ENSURE THE PERMANENT ENDING OF POLITICALLY MOTIVATED VIOLENCE. WE ARE ALSO INSISTENT THAT IF WE ENTER A N I EXECUTIVE THAT WE MUST BE ABLE TO GIVE FULL SUPPORT TO THE ENFORCEMENT OF LAW AND ORDER. THIS CAN ONLY BE DONE IF THE POLICE SERVICE IS ACCEPTABLE THROUGHOUT N I AND IF ALL SECTIONS CAN IDENTIFY IT. WE FELT THAT THESE AIMS CAN BEST BE ACHIEVED IF THE COUNCIL OF IRELAND HAS A POSITIVE ROLE IN POLICING, COMMON LAW ENFORCEMENT AND THE DEFENCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN BOTH PARTS OF IRELAND. THESE ARE MATTERS WHICH WE SHOULD DISCUSS IN DETAIL AS PART OF OUR AGENDA.

NO INSTITUTION OF THIS NATURE CAN BE STATIC OR RIGID. IT WILL OBVIOUSLY EVOLVE WITH TIME AND CHANGING CIRCUMSTANCES AND THE MEANS OF SUCH EVOLUTION SHOULD BE EXPLICIT IN ANY ARRANGEMENTS THAT ARE MADE.

FINALLY MAY I SAY THAT THE PROBLEM WHICH HAVE DIVIDED THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND AT GREAT COST FOR CENTURIES AND WHICH HAVE SERIOUSLY DISTURBED ANGLO/IRISH RELATIONS ARE NO GREATER OR NO MORE BITTER THAN THOSE WHICH HAVE DIVIDED THE PEOPLE OF EUROPE. YET WE MEET AT A TIME WHEN THOSE SAME PEOPLE OF EUROPE ARE FORGING INSTITUTIONS WHICH WILL DEVELOP THEIR COMMON INTEREST, WHICH WILL DEVELOP MUTUAL UNDERSTANDING AND RESPECT AND WILL PROGRESSIVELY AND BY AGREEMENT ELIMINATE THE DIFFICULTIES BETWEEN THEM. IT SHOULD NOT BE BEYOND US AT THIS CONFERENCE TO DO LIKEWISE FOR THE ISLAND OF IRELAND.

END OF SPEECH.

CAN BE CONTACTED ON 235-4459 IF REQUIRED. WILL FORWARD ALLIANCE SPEECH WHEN RECEIVED.

MB 6/12/73

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