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Reference

21.12.82

~~Miss Davies~~
~~Mr Russell~~

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21/12

Ms Liz Drummond
NIO Press Office
LONDON

BRIEFING MATERIAL FOR PM'S NEW YEAR INTERVIEWS

Below is briefing requested in your minute of
14 December which may be useful in the Prime
Minister's New Year interviews.

Mr Johnston
To see - this
may be relevant
to the N°10 request
for info due 22/12
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21/12

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Mr [unclear]

D.A. DAVID GILLILAND

17 December 1982

CODE 18-78

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BRIEFING MATERIAL FOR PM'S NEW YEAR INTERVIEWS

The NI Assembly and the political scene:

Government remains intent on making political progress in Northern Ireland. The Assembly provides elected representatives with the chance to have a real say in their own affairs. It is up to them to show people in Northern Ireland that politics can provide the answer to their problems. There is a long way to go but we have taken the first important step.

Security:

A useful line to take on security would be that while nothing can dull our sense of outrage at the tragic deaths resulting from terrorist violence, it does no service to the fortitude of the people of the Province or to the courage and dedication of the security forces to ignore the very considerable security successes. There have been a growing number of convictions before the courts for terrorist type offences and during the year the police laid charges in respect of 650 serious terrorist crimes. Taking all serious incidents into account, the overall level of violence continues to decline. The work is slow and methodical, but the results are showing through. Compared with 8-10 years ago there has been a marked improvement. Visitors, deterred so often by the highlighting of violent incidents, are constantly amazed by the very different picture they see and experience at first hand.

DEPARTMENT OF FINANCE AND PERSONNEL

Public expenditure programme:

Total public expenditure allocation for NI in 1983/84 is £3,827m, an increase of £281m on the 1982 figure. This is a reflection of the Government's interest in the special needs of the Province.

Allocations out of this amount include: £405m for industry, trade, energy and employment, including £190^{MILLION} for industrial support and development spending, with the promise that this provision will be kept under review in the light of constant

monitoring of requirements and priorities in the year ahead.

On the social security front the programme will continue to be funded in full parity with GB. £1,086m will be spent in 1983/84, an increase of £15m on last year's planned expenditure.

DEPARTMENT OF THE ENVIRONMENT

Housing:

Housing is this department's top social priority. Almost £300m is being spent on housing this year (1982-83) and £330m has been allocated for next year.

This year the Northern Ireland Housing Executive has embarked on Belfast's largest ever programme of housing development. It involves the repair and improvement of houses and the construction of 2,500 new homes on 60 sites in the city.

Public sector house sales:

More public sector houses have been sold in NI than in any other area of the UK. By the end of the current financial year, the Housing Executive expect to have completed a total of 14,500 sales. The number processed and completed this year is expected to be nearly 6,000, producing £38m income for the Executive.

Enterprise zone for Londonderry:

There was good news this year for Londonderry, which has a long history of high unemployment. The Government announced that the city was to be the location of NI's second enterprise zone. NI's first zone, situated in Belfast, is showing encouraging results with 365 new jobs already attracted to the area in the first year, with more in the pipeline.

Roads:

For its size NI has one of the finest road systems in Europe and important additional developments are in hand. Two major schemes now under way will cost almost £50m. One is the road link between the M1 and M2 motorways. The other is the new Foyle Bridge in Londonderry.

DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

New industrial development arrangements:

The industrial development arrangements in Northern Ireland were reorganised during the year to provide the most effective machinery possible to carry forward the drive for inward investment.

A new Industrial Development Board has been set up charged with the difficult task of attracting more inward investment. Government is confident it has the resources and the expertise to deliver the goods as the world's economies climb out of recession. The Board is chaired by an experienced local businessman Sir Desmond Lorimer. Its chief executive is Mr Saxon Tate, who has extensive top-level industrial experience.

Promotional visits by Ministers:

Ministers have made frequent visits to the USA to spread the news that NI offers extremely attractive terms to investors. Considerable progress has been made on this front. Foreign businessmen who have invested in NI are also acting as excellent ambassadors as they spread the news of their very favourable experiences in NI.

Youth training programme:

Some £45 million is being spent on the Youth Training Programme in the Province. Under the programme 16 year-old school-leavers are guaranteed a year's comprehensive training. Here NI is a year ahead of the rest of the UK - an indication of the importance Government attaches to the future of young people and of Government determination to give them a positive start in life despite the current unemployment level.

In November (the latest figure) 112,000 people (20.1%) were out of work, but much is also being spent on special schemes to provide work for long-term unemployed adults. Both these areas will receive even more money next year.

Energy:

The high cost of energy has been a major problem in NI. During a visit to Belfast in 1981 the Prime Minister announced that electricity prices would be subsidised to keep them in line with the highest level in England and Wales. This has been welcomed by both industry and domestic consumers. At one time the gas industry appeared certain to face complete run-down. There is now a real prospect of its continuing on a commercial basis through piping natural gas from the Kinsale field in the Republic.

De Lorean (if raised):

Everyone regrets that the Company closed throwing so many out of work. Further comment cannot be offered as various aspects are under investigation by the Public Accounts Committee and the police, and there are other matters before the courts in the USA. We will all be seeking to learn the lessons of this unfortunate experience, in Northern Ireland and elsewhere.

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

High standards of education:

There is much evidence to show that the great majority of parents in NI care about what goes on in schools and there is still the traditional belief that attainment of high standards in schools is important. This may be one reason why the performance of NI children in national assessment has remained so high.

There are many indications that schools and teachers have provided a most valuable stabilising influence on life for young people. There is no doubt that the violent excesses which have from time to time involved young people would have been infinitely more destructive had the education system not provided that firm anchor.

Sport and recreation:

The Education Department in NI also embraces sport and recreation. During the past decade more than £40m worth of projects such as leisure centres, playgrounds and kickabout areas, have been provided, so that NI now offers some of the best sporting facilities in Europe.

Government agreed in principle this year to assist financially the Irish Football Association on a pound-for-pound basis up to a maximum grant ceiling of £1m to provide a new two-tier grandstand, seating 6,000-8,000 spectators at Windsor Park, Belfast, home venue of the NI national soccer team. In offering this substantial grant to the IFA, Government, as well as meeting a national need, is recognising the tremendous universal and provincial appeal of football.