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**FROM: F S WOODS  
ACTING DIRECTOR, INFORMATION SERVICE  
PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS  
14 NOVEMBER 1997**

cc Distribution

PS/Secretary of State (B&L)

**WEEKLY INFORMATION BULLETIN 17-23 NOVEMBER 1997**

**Prospects for the Week**

Security will have a relatively high profile this week. **Corporal Clegg's** appeal against his murder conviction is scheduled to be heard in the Northern Ireland High Court on Monday. Very close media attention can be expected throughout and there are several aspects which will generate controversy once more.

There will be a meeting on Monday with the Chairman of PANI to discuss **policing legislation** and on Wednesday a meeting with the DUP on the policing theme which may result in publicity.

The **Emergency Provisions Bill** has its second reading in the Commons on Tuesday.

At the **Talks**, on Monday Strand Two will move into bi-lateral sessions with Senator Mitchell and Strand One will follow the same format with Mr Murphy. It is expected there will be a series of other meetings both inter-government and inter-party. It is likely the Business Committee will meet on Wednesday and there will be meetings of the Liaison Sub-committees on confidence building and decommissioning.

Ministerial **visits to councils** continue with Larne and Omagh on Wednesday and Magherafelt on Thursday.

**Mr Malcolm Moss** of the Shadow Northern Ireland team will be visiting Northern Ireland from Thursday to Saturday.

**The Forum's** provisional programme for Friday has a motion for debate calling on the Government to treat all the people of Northern Ireland equally. The Forum has expressed a

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wish to visit the Anglo-Irish Secretariat at **Maryfield** and this is under active consideration with the Irish.

The Northern Ireland **Audit Office Report** on the Government's sale of Belfast International Airport will be published on Thursday. It is expected to be critical and as it follows closely on the Positively Belfast controversy it will be a very hot item for media.

DED's involvement with **Mackies** is currently being researched by the BBC's Spotlight team and could result in a programme as early as Tuesday. However as much of the proposed subject matter would appear to have legal implications it is unclear if this will proceed. If it does it is sure to be controversial.

The civil actions taken by the Government against accountants Arthur Andersen in relation to the de Lorean accounts have been settled out of court and there may be continuing interest, particularly from financial and US journalists.

Also on the economic side, there will continue to be fall-out from the closure of the Coats Viyella plant in Lurgan with the loss of over 500 jobs.

### **Opportunities this week**

The Secretary of State's visit to the United States continues. Monday starts in Los Angeles with a morning press conference followed by a lunchtime speech on the theme "Northern Ireland - prospects for peace and the role of business". Then to San Francisco for an evening engagement with members of the Irish American community. A series of interviews with San Francisco media is included on Tuesday.

Mr Murphy will visit Brussels in the second half of the week to promote Northern Ireland's interests in Europe. The programme will have both European and political themes. The main speaking opportunity is on Wednesday when he will visit the Northern Ireland Centre in Europe and meet Commissioners and senior officials of the Commission.

On Friday a visit to the Independent Commission of Police Complaints provides a doorstepping opportunity on the security side.

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## KEY THEMES

### Political

The Government's stated intention is to ensure that the vital principles of democracy underpin developments towards a long-term political settlement. Lasting stability must grow out of a broad consensus and the clearly articulated desire for disparate groupings to work together in the common interest. Consent has always been, and remains, the key issue in any proposals for change.

The views of political leaders and their constituents are welcomed by the Government, which is committed to a more open and accountable approach. New institutions can and will be developed only in ways which take full account of the interests and aspirations of both communities.

The British and Irish governments agree that the way forward must be on the basis of implementing all aspects of the Mitchell report. These proposals offer a fair and balanced approach.

### Talks

For the Government's part, we are working hard to see the talks process move forward; we have provided the opportunity for inclusive talks, we have got the real issues on the table for discussion.

Progress is slow. But these are still early days - it's less than two months since the substantive negotiations began. The key step is to have the parties engaged.

The process was never going to be easy - it is not surprising that it is taking time for the parties to get into detailed discussions on sensitive issues. There are real difficulties to be grappled with.

The success of this process depends on the parties reaching agreement amongst themselves. We will do all we can to facilitate that process but, at the end of the day, it is only the parties which have the power to achieve agreement.

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Sinn Fein visit to No 10

The Government has made it clear, following the entry of Sinn Fein to the talks process that they will be treated the same as other political parties.

In the same way that he meets other parties the Prime Minister is therefore likely to meet Sinn Fein in due course. However no meeting has yet been arranged.

Parallel talks involving the Prime Minister

There is nothing unusual in the fact that meetings are happening at No 10 as well as Castle Buildings. The Prime Minister's engagement reflects his commitment to the political process and the priority that the Government gives to it.

We welcome the similar engagement by the Taoiseach with a number of the key players.

Decommissioning

The Commission is working to complete its initial report, following discussion with the two governments.

The Commission is expected to circulate the report to the Liaison Sub-Committee on Decommissioning within the next week or so.

Consent

Both Governments remain fundamentally committed to the principle of consent in all its aspects, as set out both in United Kingdom law in section 1 of the Northern Ireland Constitution Act and in the Downing Street Declaration.

This means that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom will not change without the consent of a majority of its people. Moreover, we are committed to putting any agreed outcome to the negotiations to the people of Northern Ireland for approval in a referendum.

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As far as the political negotiations are concerned the guarantees are even stronger. This is because of the "Triple Lock" which requires the consent of the parties, Parliament and the people of Northern Ireland themselves.

DUP/UKUP

While we believe that the process would be strengthened by their participation, we have continuing links with them which enable us to hear their views on current issues.

Sinn Fein

A commitment to non-violence and democracy is the only basis for the negotiations. We are in no doubt that Sinn Fein and the IRA are inextricably linked. If Sinn Fein dishonour their commitment to the Mitchell principles, whether through their own actions or a return to IRA violence, they will be out of the negotiations. Gerry Adams has signed Sinn Fein up to the Mitchell principles, so they are committed to:

- exclusively peaceful means;
- total disarmament of all paramilitaries;
- renounce force and oppose its use by others (eg IRA); and
- accept any agreement in the negotiations.

We shall hold Sinn Fein to these commitments. The Mitchell principles commit Sinn Fein to the total disarmament of all paramilitaries. As Mitchell said, there has to be a compromise. We support his compromise of decommissioning during negotiations. Mr Adams said he would approach these negotiations on the basis of 'compromise, compromise, compromise'. He, like everyone else, must deliver.

Parades Bill

Tackling the parades issue could make an enormous contribution to the search for a lasting settlement which is being pursued in the Talks process.

We are convinced the way forward is a policy based both on rights, and on the responsibilities which go with them. Rights - the right to free assembly, which includes the right to march and the right to protest against marches, peacefully and within the law. Responsibilities - in a democratic society we all have the responsibility to express our rights in a way which respects the rights and freedom of others.

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The importance of achieving a local accommodation is stressed throughout the North Report. No decision making process can match an amicable agreement on the ground.

## **Security**

We condemn without reservation any use of violence in whatever form.

While there remains any threat from terrorist groups it is incumbent on the Government to ensure that adequate measures are in place to safeguard the public.

The police and army have made a number of changes to the security profile following the ceasefire, including reductions in security force patrols and military support to the RUC.

However our approach to security will be examined in the light of recent events and we will act accordingly. We will not move more quickly than events on the ground allow. Any steps already taken can be quickly reversed if necessary.

### De-escalatory Measures

Since the IRA ceasefire there has been a considerable reduction in the level of security force patrolling in many areas including Londonderry and Belfast city centres.

Many road barriers have been re-opened.

Internment powers are being removed and all exclusion orders have been lifted.

### South Armagh Towers

As with all aspects of security the continuing requirement for observation posts in South Armagh is regularly reviewed against the prevailing threat.

A number of groups have not declared a ceasefire and the threat from these groups remains. The device in Markethill was a reminder of the need for appropriate security in the Armagh area.

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Security Force Presence in West Belfast

Since the PIRA ceasefire on 20 July there has been a considerable reduction in the number and frequency of military patrols in West Belfast. There are far fewer soldiers on the streets than previously.

Because of the reduction in Army patrolling, the GOC and the Chief Constable have been able to reduce the number of soldiers deployed for duty in Belfast by relocating one battalion.

The RUC will continue to carry out their duties in West Belfast as they do in every other part of Northern Ireland.

Emergency Provisions Bill

The Government wishes to be able eventually to repeal this legislation. However, that is not possible at present.

Some terrorist groups, on both sides, remain active and we will not leave the security forces nor the criminal justice system in Northern Ireland without the means they need to counter those activities.

The Home Secretary has announced the government's intention to present new proposals to replace both the EPA and the Prevention of Terrorism Act (PTA) with permanent UK-wide counter-terrorism legislation. These will be published in a joint Home Office / Northern Ireland Office consultation paper early in the new year.

In the interim, and in advance of any fundamental reform of the counter terrorism legislation, a renewed and amended Emergency Provisions Act will continue to provide the people of Northern Ireland with vital protections against the terrorist threat.

Resignations from the IRA and Sinn Fein

Our security advice is that the IRA ceasefire continues to be stable. This is the key point for the talks process and Sinn Fein's participation in that process.

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Corporal Clegg

This is entirely a matter for the courts. It would be inappropriate for us to comment.

Collusion (Allegations by Sinn Fein of security force collusion with loyalist terrorists targeting republicans in West Belfast)

The RUC have stated that sensitive information is held so that unauthorised persons do not have access to it.

There have been many claims of collusion between the security forces and paramilitary organisations but no evidence has been produced to back up these allegations.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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Recognition of Victims of Violence

A commission has been set up to look at possible ways to recognise the pain and suffering felt by victims of violence arising from the troubles of the last 30 years, including those who have died or been injured in the service of the community.

The Prime Minister has said that from his discussions and meetings with people across Northern Ireland, he felt that not enough attention had been paid to those who had suffered.

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The Commissioner, Sir Kenneth Bloomfield is undertaking a consultation exercise through Northern Ireland and beyond. Advertisements inviting views will be placed in the press in the near future.

He will have particular regard to the possibility of establishing a new memorial reflecting both the sorrows of the past and hope for a stable and peaceful future.

Bloody Sunday

The new material which has been submitted to the Secretary of State is being considered and Government hopes to make an announcement as soon as possible. (We haven't at any stage put a timescale on this.)

Prisoner Transfers

The Government attaches considerable importance to enabling prisoners to maintain family ties while serving their sentences. As part of a number of measures to facilitate family contact there is provision for prisoners to transfer to another United Kingdom jurisdiction, or to one of the Islands, where they have close family members.

Minor changes have been made to the transfer policy.

With reference to the intention to reside in the receiving jurisdiction following release, consideration will now be given to, inter alia, whether 'the prisoner has demonstrated through preparations that he has made for his life following release from prison that he intends to reside in the receiving jurisdiction upon release and he is in the later stages of his sentence'.

Previously the policy required only that there was good reason to believe the prisoner intended to reside in the receiving jurisdiction following release.

**Rights and Confidence Building**

This Government is committed to the fundamental principles of fairness and justice; there will be no second-class citizens. We are determined to see full respect for, and equality of,

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civil, political, social and cultural rights and freedom from discrimination for everyone. We are committed to building a society where the different identities are treated equally and enjoy mutual respect.

We will seek wherever possible initiatives to build confidence throughout the community and have announced a programme of specific measures including:- combating discrimination in labour market and implementation of North Report. The Government has now published a White Paper on the incorporation of the European Convention on Human Rights into UK Law and we have not ruled out that further provisions in addition to the incorporation of the Convention might be appropriate for the unique circumstances of Northern Ireland. We will also seek to increase confidence in the RUC through reform of structures and the complaints system

These measures will threaten no-one and reflect sound principles which should underpin any fair minded society.

It is important that confidence-building is seen as something which is of importance to both the main communities in Northern Ireland. It would be wrong to think of it in terms of a 'shopping list' put forward by one community to the exclusion of the other. This Government wants to win the trust and confidence of both communities in Northern Ireland by clearly being seen to be fair and even-handed to everyone.

**DOE ISSUES**

Positively Belfast

The DOE will continue to brief opinion formers about Government's rationale for supporting major events, namely the economic benefits - including increased spending on local services such as hotels, restaurants and shops - and the promotion of an attractive image of Northern Ireland to the rest of the world. The British Senior Golf Championship, for example, enjoyed a world-wide television audience including 9 hours coverage in the USA.

Belfast International Airport

Interest is likely to focus on the question of clawback on onward sale. In relation to this DOE acted in line with HM Treasury advice. At Para 4.7 the NIAO report states: "NIAO accepts that DOE's approach was in line with Treasury thinking".

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The NIAO Report will be taken by the PAC on 10 December and therefore any comment now must be limited to clarification about facts or interpretation.

(Signed)

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