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FROM: FRANK WOODS  
INFORMATION SERVICE  
7 FEBRUARY 1997

cc See attached list.

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B

WEEKLY INFORMATION BULLETIN - 8-14 FEBRUARY 1997

Parades and the decommissioning issue will dominate next week's events.

On Saturday up to 20 Loyalist bands plan to march past Harryville Roman Catholic church with the organisers describing it as a civil rights march and not a parade. Police are still considering whether the parade, timed to coincide with Saturday evening Mass, should be allowed, but it will inevitably attract media attention.

The anniversary of the Docklands bomb and the ending of the PIRA ceasefire is likely to generate some media interest this weekend.

The North Report on Parades moves forward with local advertisements seeking views on the major recommendations, particularly a decision making role for the Commission. Opinion is also being sought from interested parties including the Orange Order and local resident groups. It is hoped to name the five person Commission team next week.

On the talks front, bilaterals will continue on Monday with a plenary session planned for Wednesday. The sticking point remains the decommissioning issue, though with the approach of the General Election, discussion will also centre on arrangements for adjournment of the talks. Consensus will be sought with the Irish to "park" the talks safely during this period with an agreement resumption date once the election has been held.

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The debate on policing reform is also on the agenda with a \*meeting on Monday with a DUP delegation led by Peter Robinson followed by a \*visit to Craigavon on Tuesday to meet the RUC and the Council's Community Policing Liaison Committee at which the various reports published in January will be discussed. This is part of the planned programme to increase awareness of policing issues at local level.

Also on Monday there will be a \*meeting with the Grand Master of the Orange Order.

A \*meeting with a US Senate delegation on Friday will attract media interest which there is \*participation on the Any Questions programme on Radio Four on Friday.

On Tuesday the launch of a Domestic Tourism Marketing Initiative, involving co-operation with Bord Failte, may attract some criticism from the pro-Union lobby.

Wednesday will see another record fall in unemployment, and the announcement of a £900,000 investment by the IDB which will support the creation of 25 new jobs in north Belfast by GB company ASE/Card Dynamics.

On the education front there will be media interest in the Transfer Test results due to be announced this Saturday.

On Thursday Glen Electric will announce a £5m investment at Newry, with 109 new jobs.

There are \*meetings on Tuesday to discuss Further Education provision and the decision to scrap the School Crossing Patrol service. There will be doorstep opportunities on Thursday during a \*visit to Enniskillen and to a \*reception for University prizewinners.

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DANI has announced an outbreak of a virulent strain of Newcastle disease in chickens which is likely to dominate the agriculture scene for the next few weeks. On the positive front some 30 firms from Northern Ireland will exhibit at the International Food and Drink Exhibition in London, with a \*visit on the opening day.

Key Themes

POLITICAL TALKS PROCESS

The Government believes absolutely that dialogue represents the best way forward in Northern Ireland, and the only democratic alternative to further futile violence.

Progress has been gradual and incremental, rather than offering spectacular break through, but we will continue to explore with the parties the scope for early progress to resolve the decommissioning issue so that the way is clear to launch the three strand discussions.

Those negotiations bring together both Governments and all those Northern Ireland parties committed to exclusively peaceful means; the negotiations are capable of addressing all the issues which need to be resolved if there is to be a comprehensive political settlement which could underpin lasting peace in Northern Ireland.

The Government remains fully committed to the talks process; we want to see it continue in the time remaining before the election, and resume with renewed vigour as quickly as possible thereafter.

SINN FEIN AND THE TALKS

The Government would like to see all parties with a mandate participate in the talks, as 9 of the 10 parties already do.

The ending of the ceasefire denied Sinn Fein the opportunity to continue, on equal terms, in the talks process.

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The way remains open for them to enter, but only if the IRA publicly call a genuine ceasefire; borne out by words, deeds and actions on the ground.

It remains the Government's determined policy that no-one will be permitted to achieve, through intimidation and violence, a better deal politically than would be available through the democratic process.

**SECURITY**

We condemn utterly the recent attacks by terrorists who are increasingly rejected by their own communities, as we do the barbaric practice of so-called "punishment attacks" and other forms of intimidation and lawlessness. There is no place in our society for violence of any sort for any purpose and regardless of perpetrator. That is a view shared by the Irish and American governments.

We will continue to fight violence and terrorism with all necessary resources and under the rule of law.

**NORTH REPORT AND PARADES**

The Government recognises that this is an extremely sensitive and emotive issue and will establish in the very near future an independent Parades Commission with important mediation, conciliation and educational roles. We believe however that the proposals for a decision making role for an independent body should be subject to further consultation, taking account of the North recommendations, and this process will go ahead as quickly as possible.

(Signed)

F WOODS

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