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Delivered by the British ambassador
and Mr John Hickman to the
Taoiseach at 4.30 p.m. on 20/1/75.

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21/1
PRIME MINISTER'S REPLY TO THE
TAOISEACH'S MESSAGE OF 9 JANUARY

Dear Taoiseach,


Banks for Welf
21/1

Thank you for your letter about our forthcoming document on power-sharing to be published as a preliminary to the Constitutional Convention. I can assure you that there is no change in our policy that any proposals from the Convention to be acceptable must include some form of power-sharing in government.

It will be open to the Convention to consider the way in which such power-sharing should be achieved. The Northern Ireland Act 1974 defines the Convention's task as "considering what provision for the government of Northern Ireland is likely to command the most widespread acceptance throughout the community there". As I have said before, what we will accept from the Convention is a solution which is agreed and not simply determined by a majority decision. It is, we think, important that the Convention should realise, when they are considering forms of government, that while they ought certainly to be concerned with the highest level of government there are many levels of government, and that it is important that all members of the Community should have a real sense of participation in the direction of public affairs at every level.

Our forthcoming document is intended to provide the basis for informed discussion at the Convention of systems of government at all levels. It therefore explores the problems which arise with divided communities with illustrations from various countries, such as Belgium and Switzerland, and devices used throughout /the

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the world where there are such divisions, including arrangements for entrenched minorities and bills of rights. The document will indicate, however, that many of these systems, while they may be useful elements in any system of government, will not of themselves ensure that real sense of active sharing in government and the direction of public affairs which we consider to be essential. Our commitment to power-sharing has not been changed.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd) Harold Wilson

20 January, 1975

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