



NORTHERN IRELAND  
Information Service



19 April 1995

**DOYLE REPORT**

In an oral statement today in the House of Commons, Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, accepted the conclusions and recommendations in a report by Sir Reginald Doyle on the fire at Parliament Buildings, Stormont on 2 January 1995. He said that several of the findings were deeply disturbing and he expressed his determination to address the serious shortcomings which had been revealed.

Sir Reginald, who was formerly Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Fire Services at the Home Office, concluded that the most likely cause of the fire was an electrical fault in the wiring below the Speaker's Chair in the Commons Chamber. He considered that it was improbable the fire was started deliberately. His conclusion on the cause of the fire is in accord with the findings of the Northern Ireland Forensic Science Laboratory assisted by an independent electrical consultant.

Sir Reginald also concluded that the overall standard of staff safety in Crown buildings in Northern Ireland is generally satisfactory, but he has made a number of recommendations to further improve fire safety.

In relation to the fire at Parliament Buildings, Sir Patrick Mayhew expressed very serious concern over the fact that the watchkeepers had not detected the fire; part of the building had not been

accessible to the watchkeepers; water supply for fire fighting purposes was not immediately available even though the absence of water in the fire hydrant system had been reported 18 days earlier; no fire drill had taken place for 5 years; and the fire brigade had sought access to the Stormont Estate at the wrong entrance.

The Secretary of State said that among other remedial actions instructions to the watchkeepers were being revised; access arrangements for the watchkeepers to all parts of the building had been ensured; three officials had been reprimanded concerning the absence of water in the fire hydrant system; and action had been taken to ensure that fire precautions were being given proper priority in all Crown buildings.

Sir Patrick announced that the Commons Chamber would be restored at a cost of around £1.5m as part of a two year refurbishment of Parliament Buildings, which would cost in the regions of £20m.

The Secretary of State said although a refurbishment scheme for Parliament Buildings had been under way since February 1994, concentrating on Health and Safety and Fire Precaution work, he greatly regretted that "fire safety precautions have simply not been given a sufficiently high priority". He accepted Sir Reginald's advice that fire safety work should not be allowed to wait until it could be incorporated in wider refurbishment schemes. Sir Patrick has set up a task force under a senior DOE official to ensure implementation of the Doyle Report's detailed recommendations, including fire certificates for all relevant Crown buildings within two years, improvements in arrangements for handling fire safety matters in Departments, and installation - where appropriate - of modern fire detection systems.

The Secretary of State assured the House of Commons that he was determined to address the shortcomings identified by the Report and said that he believed that the implementation of the Doyle recommendations would lead to a general improvement of the fire safety arrangements in all Crown buildings in Northern Ireland.