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From the Permanent Secretary

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URGENT

FROM: F A ELLIOTT
DATE: 20 October 1994

cc PS/Baroness Denton (B)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Maxwell (Cent Sec)
Mr Hunter
Mr Simpson

Minister
(Baroness Denton)

John Hunter will be mentioning to you that we have been considering what might be done as part of a "peace package" to show that people left disabled as a result of violence have not been forgotten. John Alderdice, the Alliance Party leader, has been advocating some tangible recognition of this kind. It now has added urgency, as David Fell told me yesterday evening that it would be useful to include an announcement during the visit of which you will be aware being made in the Province tomorrow.

Our present thinking is to set aside a sum of perhaps £1 million from our "People First" money, which is earmarked for care in the community, as a fund first to support and develop services provided by the Regional Disablement Centre at Musgrave Park. These are in real need of improvement, for example to fund a new type of wheelchair and to expand the Disabled Living Centre where disabled people can try out aids and appliances for home living. Secondly, we think we should recognise mental as well as physical disability caused by violence, and use some of the money to improve mental health services through Purdysburn and other psychiatric centres. Recent research publicised in the Belfast Telegraph yesterday (extract attached) shows the need and makes reference to mental as well as physical damage apposite. We could also increase the grant to Cruse, the voluntary organisation specialising in bereavement counselling and support.

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More thought needs to be given to the details, and we would want to take into account views from the field and from disabled people themselves. The paragraph we are suggesting for tomorrow's speech is therefore cast in the general terms attached. You could then make specific announcements on the use of the money as we proceed.

Are you content that we should proceed on these lines? In particular, while there would be advantage in not mentioning a specific sum at this stage, I think that on balance it would be better to refer at least to a round figure of up to £1 million.

[Handwritten signature of Alan Elliott]

F A ELLIOTT

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CONTRIBUTION TO SPEECH

As we look forward to the future with renewed optimism, we must also not forget the victims and their families who have suffered so much during the last 25 years of violence. The staff who work in the health and personal social services in Northern Ireland have responded to their needs as caring and dedicated professionals and I pay tribute to their excellent work. But victims and their families often will have long term physical and psychological scars and disabilities which need continuing care, compassion and support. The Government wants to do more to help staff in this most important work and Baroness Denton will therefore be setting up a special fund to provide additional help for people disabled by violence in Northern Ireland. Up to £1 million will be made available and I would see this being used to help people with physical disabilities or psychiatric problems, and people needing bereavement counselling and support.