

I have had a frank and useful discussion about the situation in Northern Ireland this morning with the Foreign Minister of the Irish Republic, Dr. Hillery.

The Canadian Government has been following with concern the course of the events in Northern Ireland. The continuing violence and loss of life and particularly the incident in Londonderry on January 30 represent an immense human tragedy. The only hope of bringing this tragedy to an end seems by general admission to lie in the negotiation of a political solution. The first prerequisite for such a solution, however, is that those involved in the situation in whatever way should be willing to seek a solution by peaceful means and to create the climate of calm and confidence that is essential to negotiations. Unfortunately these conditions seem farther away than ever at the moment and elements on both sides of the present conflict argue that their use of force is justified by the other's attitude.

As friend of the Irish and British peoples, we can only deplore the present situation in which violence and emotion feed on each other. We sympathize with those who are suffering and we urge that all concerned should abstain from lawlessness and violence, no matter what the emotions involved. But we cannot solve other people's problems for them and we cannot intervene in the internal affairs of either the British or the Irish governments. Nor would it be helpful to try to judge from the outside the rights and wrongs of particular incidents which should in any case be seen in the broader context of the whole situation in that area.

This said, I told Dr. Hillery that I would be passing on to the British Government some of his observations on the situation in Ulster as I had passed on to him comments on Northern Ireland made to us by the British Government.