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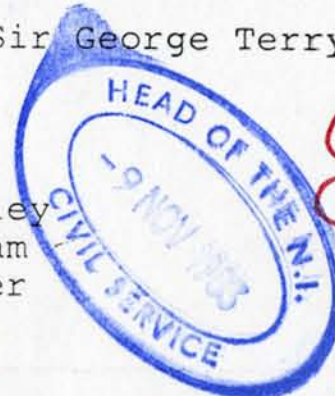
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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND ASSEMBLY
PARTY LEADERS IN STORMONT CASTLE ON 9 NOVEMBER 1983

The Secretary of State met Assembly Party leaders on 9 November to
discuss the follow up to the publication of Sir George Terry's report
on Kincora. Those present were:

Secretary of State
Mr Dugdale
Mr Buxton
Mr Gilliland
Mr Lyon

Dr Paisley
Mr Graham
Mr Napier



① Sir Ewart
② M. Samuels

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The Party leaders said that the publication of Sir George Terry's conclusions was no substitute for a full judicial public inquiry. Assembly members had only been able to get copies of the published conclusions through the Press, they had not been sent them direct. They had no basis for assessing the conclusions, since none of Terry's evidence had been published. He had not dealt directly and in detail with some of the allegations circulating in the Press, such as the existence of a Police report as long ago as 1973/74. Nor was it known from whom he had taken evidence or who might have refused to see him. It was not possible to assess how firmly based were his recommendations, but some seemed ill-researched. For example, it did not appear that Terry had sufficient information or expertise on which to base his comments and recommendations on the quality of the Social Services. His reference to establishing a liaison officer between local authorities and the Police was inaccurate since local authorities no longer had responsibility for children's homes. His final comments which suggested that Northern Ireland society was to blame were deeply resented.

The Party leaders said that the Government should recognise that the allegations and innuendos would not go away. They continued to be a staple of certain Sunday newspapers and were widely repeated throughout the Province. They could only finally be laid to rest if a judicial inquiry was established which could take evidence in public and which had powers of subpoena. This would enable journalists to be called to give, in public, the evidence on which they based their newspaper reports. The inquiry might also be able to take evidence in private, for example when they were interviewing former inmates of the Kincora

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home. An inquiry set up under the 1921 Act still seemed the best way of achieving these objectives. Without it, it would remain an ugly sore festering at the heart of Northern Ireland's life.

The Secretary of State said he fully recognised the seriousness of the problem. He regretted that Assembly members had not received their own copies of Terry's published conclusions. He, the Chief Constable, and the DPP had copies of the full report, but it was not appropriate for publication. The way the conclusions had been phrased had no doubt reassured Party leaders that the NIO had no hand in their drafting, as some had alleged. The Terry inquiry had, however, been exhaustive. Everyone had been given the opportunity to give evidence. That inquiry, together with the RUC's own enquiries and the involvement of the DPP all confirmed that there was nothing more in the affair which required criminal cases to be brought. He recognised the problem now was how to deal with continuing innuendo and rumour. He was not clear that an inquiry under the 1921 Act was the most appropriate procedure. It enabled witnesses to blacken the reputation of others with impunity. He doubted whether it would be acceptable to the House of Commons who would need to approve the establishment of such an inquiry. At present, therefore, he was keeping an open mind. He wished to take account of the points made in the Assembly debate later that day, and assess the general feeling in Northern Ireland. He would be considering the matter over the next few days in the light of these points, and of his earlier undertaking in his statement to the House of Commons about a further inquiry. In this context, he would examine the precedent of Lord Denning's inquiry into the Profumo affair, as well as other possibilities. He would take account of the wish that some evidence at least should be given in public, of the possibility of subpoena powers, and of the problems of indemnity and immunity. He would be discussing the options with his Ministerial colleagues in Cabinet in the next week or so, and would hope to make a statement announcing his decision to the House of Commons very shortly after that.

for J M LYON
Private Secretary

9 November 1983

Mr Gilliland
Mr Doyne-Ditmas
Mr Hammond - M
Mr Buchanan
Mr Coulson
Mr Boys Smith - M
Mr Bickham

CC PS/SOS (B&L) - M
PS/Mr Scott (B&L) - M
PS/Mr Patten (B&L) - M
PS/PUS (B&L) - M
PS/Sir Ewart Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Brennan - M
Mr Dugdale
Mr Angel - M
Mr Buxton
Mr Merifield