

PC 326/3

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HCS/3/80

NOTE OF STOCKTAKING MEETING HELD IN SIR EWART BELL'S OFFICE ON
27 MARCH 1984

Present	Sir Ewart Bell	CC	Those present
	Mr Bourn		PS/SOS (B & L) - M
	Mr Burns - M		PS/PUS (B & L) - M
	Mr Buxton		Mr Brennan - M
	Mr Carvill		Mr Angel - M
	Mr Norris - M		Mr Doyne Ditmas
	Mr Merifield		Mr Gilliland
	Mr Palmer		Mr Cowling - M
	Mr Templeton (deputising for Mr Gilliland)		Mr Bell
	Mr Sebastian (deputising for Mr Edis)		Mr Boys Smith - M
	Mr McCormick		Mr Coston - M
			Mr Edis
			Mr Russell
			Mr Wood - M
			Mr Abbott - M
			Mr Bickham - M

POLITICAL SITUATION

1. The DUP had sought to raise the profile of their activity both inside and outside the Assembly in the run up to the election to the European Parliament in June; however following some pressure from Alliance, who had complained that the DUP were abusing their position in the Assembly they had quietened down somewhat. It was however likely that there would be a fresh burst of DUP activity before the European Election.
2. There were contradictory indications of what might be expected from the UUP. Mr Molyneaux was seeking to keep a tight rein on his party members, and to give an impression of activity which might lead to the production of further proposals: there were indications however that the UUP's purpose was to seek to expose the Secretary of State to fresh pressure first of all because he would not be able to look favourably on the sort of ideas the UUP might eventually put forward and secondly because he was in their view leaning too far in the direction of the Forum parties. It remained, however, difficult to predict what moves the UUP might make, particularly in relation to the proposed Report Committee of the Assembly.
3. The SDLP had said that they had canvassed very thoroughly in advance of the recent Council by-election in Belfast: the success of Sinn Fein was therefore a worrying development, even though, given the very small margin of the result,

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their victory could be ascribed to personation. If such a pattern were to be repeated at the European election the SDLP might be forced to make some change in their approach.

4. It was now clear that the report of the Forum would not be completed until after the middle of April. Careful thought was being given to the nature of HMG's response, and how it might be interpreted by local, national and international audiences. While the recent Boston Seminar, in which Mr Patten had participated, had promoted some improved understanding of the British position there might be fresh and difficult pressures from US opinion after completion of the Forum's work.
5. It was very difficult to identify any means of putting pressure on the unionist parties: prorogation of the Assembly would be acceptable to many unionists and might rebound in criticism of the Secretary of State; any reconstitution of the Assembly involving an election would be very difficult for the SDLP. It might however be necessary to prorogue the Assembly at the end of the summer recess: the defence which could be offered against the inevitable criticism which would follow would be to make clear in advance that none of the alternatives which had been floated by the political parties were realistic alternatives.
6. It was also difficult to see much scope for progress in Anglo/Irish relations. The delay in the Forum had reduced the possibilities of a summit before the Irish assume the presidency of the European Community in July.

PRISONS

7. There were still indications that the threatened hunger strike by INLA remand prisoners was planned to begin in the next month or so, and thought had been given to how the potential difficulties might be contained. There were indications that it might not be taken through to the end but that it would be aimed primarily at gaining publicity and putting pressure on Kirkpatrick.
8. There had been very considerable action at headquarters and the Maze to implement the recommendations of the Hennessy Report. There had also been discussions with the Governors of the other prisons on the applicability of Hennessy recommendations. Relationships between headquarters and the governing Governors had been restored to normal; there was still some unease in dealings with the Prison Governors Association; and disagreement with the Prison Officers Association was being contained within the normal procedures for industrial relations.

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9. Although the loyalist prisoners had announced the end of their protest, there was still extensive de facto segregation in the Maze. The one attempt which had been made to integrate prisoners within a wing had led to violence. In order to make very clear that segregation was not acceptable a controlled regime was being introduced for separated non co-operating prisoners: this would allow only half of normal association, and rigorously controlled movement to and from activities: it would therefore constitute an incentive for transfer into an integrated wing thereby reducing the degree of segregation within the prison. There would be no restoration of remission lost during the protest until there had been a period of full conformity by the protestors.

SECURITY SITUATION

10. Although there had been a number of serious incidents in the past few weeks there had been little political response partly because they had been accompanied by a number of successes for the RUC notably in connection with the murder of Mr McConnell. The murder of a soldier in Londonderry on 27 March was, like the murder of Mr McConnell, a quite sophisticated job carried out in a difficult area for PIRA. Although they had undertaken some commercial bombings in the recent period it was not thought there was any radical change in the pattern of PIRA activities.
11. The arrest and extradition of McGlinchey would be bound to reduce the profile of INLA activity though they would remain capable of causing major incidents. There would be serious political difficulties if it did not prove possible to get a conviction against McGlinchey. There were signs of progress on some of the other pending cross-border extradition cases: one involving the murder of soldiers would probably be the most controversial. The extradition case against Doherty in New York would probably prove to be a lengthy affair.
12. Following the difficulties over the closure of border roads in Fermanagh there had not been much fresh pressure from politicians for further closures: the difficulties had in fact put the issue into perspective.
13. There had been no change in the approach adopted by Sinn Fein to their political and terrorist activities: their main focus of political activity was the European Election though it was not yet clear what level of personation was might be anticipated.

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14. The only notable action by the protestant paramilitaries in the recent period had been the attempt to murder Adams. It was not thought likely that there would be any particular actions in revenge. The UDA had made a number of public statements about the mobilisation of an Ulster Defence Force, but it was not thought that they had much substance.

ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL MATTERS

15. Bishop Cahal Daly had written to the Secretary of State protesting at the decisions on the allocation of places on teacher training courses. DENI would want to discuss with providers the allocations for the next year: this would be difficult given the incompatible objectives of HMG and the Roman Catholic hierarchy.
16. A working party of the Belfast Education and Library Board had put forward their recommendation that there should be a fourth Belfast Further Education College located on the site of Kelvin Secondary School, adjacent to the Royal Victoria Hospital. There were strong arguments in favour of the use of this site for hospital purposes. It is anticipated that there would be a public debate exposing both the health and educational arguments over the use of the site.
17. Bunscoil Ghaelach, an Irish language primary school in Andersonstown, had applied for maintained status and while it could be argued that the school was a devisive and unhelpful development it did meet the criteria for viability and to support it would be consistent with the policy of parental choice. It was anticipated that there would be strong criticism from one side or the other whichever way the decision went.
18. Optimistic press reports about the progress of Lear Fan were not matched by reports from IDB which indicated continued serious difficulties.
19. The European Council had failed to reach agreement over the future of the CAP and in particular over milk production. It was anticipated that the eventual outcome would probably involve serious losses for Northern Ireland farmers.
20. Short's success in gaining the USAF order would lead to fresh attention in relation to the issue of fair employment. In the meantime thought was being given as to what progress might be made toward the privatisation of the Company.

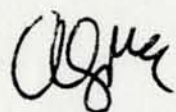
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21. There were indications that the Committee of Public Accounts had not yet resolved the form and content of its report on the De Lorean case: in the meantime thought was being given to how possible criticism of government following the report might be handled.
22. It was proving increasingly difficult for government departments to put forward sufficient projects to take up the United Kingdom quota from the European Regional Development Fund. Current work on the restructuring of the Regional Fund and the European Social Fund would put further pressures on HMG's approach and it would be necessary at each stage to register the particular Northern Ireland difficulties.
23. The volume of parliamentary questions had increased significantly over recent years. Thought was being given as to how systems might be improved, what room there might be for change in the approach to the handling of replies, and whether the volume of material given as background to Ministers could be reduced.

FINANCE AND MANPOWER

24. The guidelines for the 1984 Public Expenditure Survey would soon be available and would include a requirement for the further consideration of manpower.
25. The Treasury's response to the Secretary of State's letter about increased RUC manpower had made a number of provisos and indicated that the financial implications would need to be accommodated within the Northern Ireland block: it was hoped that the pressures could be contained within the NIO vote for 1984/85 though the prospect for later years was less clear.
26. The Bairnsweir incident had reduced the level of shortfall on criminal damage and if there were a series of similar incidents there could be pressures on the allocation for 1984/85.
27. Thought was being given as to the staffing, building and financial implications of the Hennessy Report to prepare the way for detailed proposals to DFP and HMT.



A G McCORMICK

PS/Sir Ewart Bell

30 March 1984

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