

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

HCS/10/97

cc. PS/Ministers L&B - M
 PS/PUS L&B - M
 Mr Brennan - M
 Mr Stephens
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Merifield
 Mr Chesterton - M
 Mr Spence
 Miss Elliott - M
 Mr Bell - M
 Mr G Hewitt
 Mr S Hewitt
 Mr Wood - M
 Mr Ehrman - M

PS/Secretary of State L&B - M.

ANGLO-IRISH NEGOTIATIONS:ROLE OF THE NICS

1. I share the concern expressed by Mr S Hewitt in paragraph 7 of his report of today on "Anglo-Irish Talks" (PAB/1104/DP).
2. I am absolutely determined that the NICS shall not be used as a political football, least of all to satisfy the "sensation of the day" appetites of the "Belfast Newsletter".
3. Accordingly, after discussion with PUS, I authorised Mr Gilliland this afternoon to make available to the media comment in the terms of the attached. Great damage was done to the reputation of the NICS by false suggestions post 1974 that some senior members of the Service had been less than loyal to the power-sharing executive; and although Mr Merlyn Rees has now disposed of that suggestion in a robust and fair way in his recently published book, the lesson is that notions of this kind, once allowed to establish themselves on the record, become part of legend.
4. It is not necessary, I am sure, to reassure the Secretary of State that members of the NICS share with their Home Civil Service colleagues a code of loyalty and service to the administration of the day which was sufficiently robust to withstand the movement from Stormont to Direct Rule, the power-sharing experiment, and other radical changes over recent years. We will continue to offer frank and

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

honest advice to Ministers in confidence, and to do everything within our power to make a success of whatever policies Ministers decide to pursue.



K P BLOOMFIELD

29 October 1985

CONFIDENTIAL