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CONFIDENTIALRELATIONS WITH NORTHERN IRELANDII (6) Meetings Between British Ministers and Six County Representatives

A meeting between Mr. Wilson and Capt. O'Neill took place on 5th August, 1966. The general impression of the meeting in the Press was that pressure was exerted by Mr. Wilson on questions such as discrimination and electoral reform. Mr. Wilson said later, in reply to a P.Q., as to whether he would make a statement on his talks with Capt. O'Neill that they had most useful discussions but that the details must remain confidential.

Replying to Questions in the Commons on 15th November, 1966 as to what plans he had to continue discussions with Capt. O'Neill and the Government of N.I. and whether he would initiate discussions concerning constitutional changes in the Government of N.I., Mr. Wilson stated that he had a useful discussion with Capt. O'Neill on a wide range of matters in August, that he hoped to resume the discussion fairly soon but that no date had been arranged and that he could not speculate about the subjects which would be covered. In the debate Mr. Wilson said that the complaints brought out from time to time by Mr. Fitt as well as the complaints made on both sides of the House about the electoral system in N.I. should over a period of time be discussed with the Government of N.I. because they affected representation in Westminster. He said Capt. O'Neill had shown very great courage in the last year or two in standing up to some of the most reprehensible types of activity in N.I. and that Members would be aware of the political campaign and the very squalid mock religious campaign mounted against Capt. O'Neill as a result of his actions. He added that this had not been a very propitious year for putting pressure on Capt. O'Neill in view of what he has had to face in connection with the actions already taken.

Six British Labour M.Ps. who saw the Home Secretary, Mr. Jenkins, about Six County affairs on 16th November expressed themselves

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as happy that their views were being sympathetically considered by the Government.

On 21st November the Leader of the Six County Labour Party, Mr. Ian Boyd, had a meeting with Mr. Jenkins as part of his party's campaign to exercise pressure for electoral reform and reform of discrimination in the Six Counties. On 6th December, 1966 a seventeen-man Labour and Trade Union deputation representing 200,000 people met Mr. Faulkner and three other Members of the Six County Cabinet at Stormont on electoral reform and discrimination and unanimously expressed "very grave concern and disappointment at the attitude of the Government towards matters discussed". They also deplored the Government's failure to accept the principle of "one man one vote" and the principles of parity in citizens rights between Northern Ireland and the rest of Britain. They demanded a citizens charter on seven points - see extract from "Irish Independent" of 7th December, 1966, attached.