



CONFIDENTIAL

ALL COURTS OF JUSTICE CLUSTER

BELFAST

11th February, 1965.

Mr. McAtteer

Just before the "Action Committee" saw the Prime Minister yesterday they asked to see me and after their visit I invited them to tea in the Members' Dining Room. Some of them, including I think, the leader Mr. Hume, asked me why I had not come to the meeting with the Prime Minister. I replied that I had not been asked to come. They then said that that was so but that no M.Ps had been invited to come but that Messrs. McAteer and Gormley had accompanied them. Well, that may have been the literal truth but I think it was Mr. McAteer who had arranged, and no doubt been asked to arrange, the deputation.

They put it to me point-blank what was my attitude. I said that I had always supported the Londonderry case; that I had given public support to it in the House when I was a backbencher; that, when a member of the Government, I had made such representations as were proper; but that, of course, I am bound by the principle of collective responsibility for Government decisions.

It is quite clear that there are some people of some standing on the Committee. I refer particularly to Mr. Jack, who is the City Solicitor, and Dr. Sidebottom, who is a Londonderry citizen of standing and a supporter, passive even if not active, of the Government.

You have probably seen the "Sentinel". In case you have not, I enclose a copy which was left with me. The Editor is, as you know, a member of the Council.

I have been thinking long and anxiously about the problem. It seems to me that there is a possible solution which would have three advantages. These are:-

1. It would be within the framework of the White Paper, without any drawing back.
2. It would represent a compromise which I believe would satisfy a substantial part of the Londonderry contention.

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3. It would solve the problem of Pennyburn about which, as you know, we are so worried.

This possible solution would be as follows:-

1. Incorporate in the University some faculties sited in Londonderry.
2. Have other faculties of the University at Coleraine.
3. Do not call either a college of the other. Call it the University of the North-West with some faculties in one place and others in the other. After all there is only a 45 minute road journey between the two places.
4. Proceed as soon as possible to implement the Government decision about establishing an important higher non-University educational centre at Londonderry.
5. Acquire the Pennyburn lands for the purpose of No. 4, and such part of No. 1 as could not be housed at the existing Magee establishment.

From the political point of view, I believe we are likely to have against us all the Opposition plus Messrs. Warnock and Nixon. This, in itself, is running the matter pretty fine irrespective of the situation in Londonderry. What happens there is my problem to some extent - but only to some extent because if an Independent or Labour candidate intervenes there such an infection could well spread to the great delight of the Nationalists who are already rubbing their hands over what is happening in Londonderry. And, of course, that is what is being aimed at. This campaign is not related solely to the University but I feel that we must try and get our people out of it by giving them something which they feel may "wash their face". I believe, from what two of the Action Committee said to me, that a solution on the lines I suggest might well satisfy them. Indeed it was their talk that put it into my mind. Needless to say I did not mention Pennyburn.

I think that the above constitutes an idea worth thinking about and though if we could get the Mayor to back it, all would be well, yet I

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believe that it might satisfy our people even in default of his support.

I may say that some of the Magee staff headed by a Mr. Rhodes are due to see me on Friday at noon and the Minister of Education at 12.15 p.m. They are concerned about non-prejudice to their position. I believe that they should be kept as sweet as possible on the point. I do not know the ins and outs of it, but I assume that, even though it was not desired to put it in the White Paper, there would be an obligation - at least a moral obligation - to compensate them if they were prejudiced by loss of, or derogation from, their present posts.

I should add, which I think I may have told you already, that Major Glover to-day told me that he is calling an emergency meeting of the Londonderry and Foyle Unionist Association in order to consider postponing the Annual General Meeting as he feels - so he says - that it could not safely be held on 18th February as planned in view of the general feeling - though I am not in a position as yet to say how much, or to what extent, the true Unionist elements have been infected by the general campaign.

Yours sincerely,

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