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8th October, 1968.

Yesterday, when I was in Leicester, you telephoned my office to pose two questions about the Londonderry situation which you wished me to answer. The first was whether the handling of the weekend situation by the Minister of Home Affairs had official Cabinet approval. The answer to this is "yes" as I think you will have gathered from the official statement, released after this morning's Cabinet Meeting, a copy of which I enclose.

The second question asked whether what you called the secret court proceedings on Sunday had Cabinet approval. This presumably relates to the holding of a special court at which the three organisers of the parade - Eamonn McCann, Eamonn Melough and George Finbar O'Doherty - were charged with a breach of the Public Order Act 1951 and were remanded on bail.

Originally it had been arranged that the hearing would be held in the Courthouse, and the Resident Magistrate, Clerk of Petty Sessions and Courthouse Keeper were informed accordingly. Later, however, the District Inspector decided that the hearing might lead to a scene outside the Courthouse and so arrangements were altered and the Court held in the Police Station.

This was not a secret court. Special Courts are a normal feature of Petty Sessions procedure but as they are held at very short notice, it is not customary, nor would it always be possible, to notify the Press. Should, however, a Press representative inquire he would be told if a Special Court was to be held and if he wished he would be admitted to the hearing.

Teresa
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