

970/35

CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT
STORMONT CASTLE ON TUESDAY, 7 JULY 1970, AT 11 00 AM

PRESENT: The Prime Minister
The Minister in the Senate
The Minister of Finance
The Minister of Home Affairs
The Minister of Health and Social Services
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Agriculture
The Minister of Commerce
The Minister of Development
The Minister of Community Relations
The Minister of State at the Ministry of Development
The Minister and Leader of the House

ALSO PRESENT: The Attorney-General
Joint Parliamentary Secretary in the Department of the Prime
Minister and the Ministry of Commerce (Items 1 - 7)
Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Home Affairs (Items 1 - 7)

The Secretary to the Cabinet
The Principal

1. SEARCH FOR ARMS IN THE LOWER FALLS DISTRICT *G-45 175*

Reviewing events connected with the search for arms in the Lower Falls district during the last few days, the Minister of Home Affairs explained that to have announced a formal curfew would have required the making of an Order which would have applied only from late on the Saturday (4 July), thus highlighting the situation and possibly giving rise to questions on the validity of the measures already taken. It had therefore been decided to act under the Special Powers legislation and common law. In addition to the very substantial haul of arms and ammunition, information had been discovered which would be of great value to Special Branch.

Referring to the visit of the Minister for External Affairs (Dr Hillery) of the Republic to the Lower Falls area on the previous day, the Prime Minister refuted any suggestion that his visit could be treated as having been in a private capacity. Enquiries were continuing as to how his presence had not been detected by the security forces and the Government were in touch with the United Kingdom Government on the matter.

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Ministers noted with satisfaction that the Army had, at least for the moment, severed their contacts with the Central Citizens' Defence Committee, which had been discredited following the finding of ammunition on their premises in Leeson Street and the flight to the Republic of some of their members.

The similarity of the smear campaign now being mounted against the Army to that launched against the Police on previous occasions was noted and Ministers regretted the tendency of certain important sections of the Press to play up the alleged depredations of the troops and to ignore the main issue of a very substantial arms cache which was desperately defended by the residents.

Commenting on the problem of people who had had to abandon their homes during the riots, the Minister of Development informed the meeting that, as against a peak figure of 1,073 in recognised rest centres on Sunday, 5 July, the number had now been reduced to less than 200. Almost 20 welfare organisations - official and voluntary - had been involved in the relief work. As to the houses involved in the search, little structural damage had been reported, apart from the pulling up of floor boards. The parade of women carrying bread and milk from the Upper Falls district was a completely unnecessary exercise as ample supplies were available within the Lower Falls area during the 2-hour period in which shopping was permitted on Saturday afternoon. The march could be dismissed as nothing more than a stunt.

Referring to conflicting reports as to the number of deaths and injuries, the Minister of Health and Social Services, while exonerating the Mater Hospital from any irregular practice, regretted that for a period of 3 hours at the height of the riots it was impossible to make telephone contact with it to establish the true picture. There was little doubt that unofficial casualty clearing stations had been brought into use to treat the injured and even to get them out of the country.

Damage to industrial premises in the area had been negligible, according to the Ministry of Commerce, but there had been absenteeism which in the case of the 2 main firms in the area had run to about 30 per cent on Monday, 6 July.

The age and variety of weapons captured suggested to the Minister of Education that there had been no recent organised supply of arms to the Lower Falls area at least.

That the IRA was actively involved in the Lower Falls area and that it had signally failed over the last weekend was proved by an article in the Irish Times of 6 July.

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2 OTHER SEARCHES FOR ARMS

The intention of the Army to continue the search for arms as and when necessary was confirmed by the Minister of Home Affairs, who mentioned some specific instances.

3. DAMAGE TO PROPERTY

During a discussion on the circumstances in which the owner of a house could claim compensation for riot damage, the Minister of Home Affairs pointed out that the legislation had been carefully conceived and that to lower the £20 limit would be completely impracticable. Various appeals funds existed for helping out in cases of hardship not covered by the legislative machinery.

4. SECURITY ON 13 JULY B205 " 18.

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Home Affairs recounted their recent helpful meeting with the Orange Order and expressed the hope that the processing of individual bands before and after the main parades would be restricted, thus relieving the load on the security forces. In Belfast it was anticipated that the Order would conform to suggestions about the use of the Grosvenor, Springfield and Crumlin Roads. It was hoped that in Dungiven and Pomeroy the routes would be modified to avoid any unnecessary show of Orange force in Nationalist areas.

During the parade the peace line in Belfast would be closed, the Andersonstown area would be isolated from the Field at Finaghy and anti-rumour points would be established in the centre of Belfast and at the Field. A suggestion by the Minister of Agriculture as to the diversionary affects of really good TV programmes on 13 July was to be pursued by the Parliamentary Secretary in the Prime Minister's Department. Dealing with a suggestion by the Minister in the Senate that public houses should be closed not only in Belfast but in country areas on 13 July, the Minister of Home Affairs thought that it would be inadvisable to announce such a closure at this early stage.

5. ULSTER DEFENCE REGIMENT

Ministers thought that for a variety of reasons the Ulster Defence Regiment was not making its presence sufficiently felt. These included:

1. Bad recruiting in certain areas.
2. No need for its employment in certain peaceful areas.

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3. Employment in remote places such as reservoirs.
4. Similarity of uniform to that of the Regular Forces.
5. Uninspiring advertising.

Various measures to publicise the Regiment were discussed and left to the Minister of Home Affairs to pursue, as were certain difficulties connected with attendances of members.

6. ROLE AND EQUIPMENT OF POLICE

Dealing with suggestions that there was still widespread uncertainty in the Police as to their role in riot conditions - and uncertainty which had perhaps been responsible for their failure to intervene in the Ballymacarrett riots on the weekend 27-28 June - the Minister of Home Affairs confirmed that a clear order had been issued on 4 July and a related statement by the Chief Constable had been approved by the Prime Minister himself.

In response to enquiries about the arming of Police guarding Ministers' homes, the Minister of Home Affairs informed his colleagues that since the recent shooting incident at the home of the Member for East Tyrone, precautions had been stepped up. He recognised that there was no point in equipping untrained new Police with arms and mentioned the measures he had in mind to deal with this matter.

7. PUBLICITY

Recalling how the Government had for a long time been shown in a bad light by the national press and television, the Minister of Commerce regretted that even the events of the last weekend, which had clearly demonstrated that there was a continuing and serious threat to the State, had failed to alter the tone of much of the comment. The problem was still being presented as a Catholic versus Protestant conflict, with the Government backing the latter. Calls were being made for the strengthening of our publicity services, particularly in the United States. It was agreed that Ministers should take advantage of recent events to emphasise in their speeches where the real danger lay.

8. SCARMAN TRIBUNAL

The Minister in the Senate informed the meeting that he had had a phone call that morning from Senator Lennon advising him that he was withdrawing his Motion recommending that the recent riots in Belfast should also be referred to the Scarman Tribunal. Events had apparently overtaken this issue. It was

possible, however, that other Members of the Senate might raise the matter on the Adjournment.

9. ANTI-DISCRIMINATION CLAUSE IN GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Reverting to the introduction of an Anti-Discrimination Clause in Government Contracts which had been discussed by the Cabinet on 26 June (Item 1), the Prime Minister took the view that there was a firm commitment in October 1969 to the British Government to introduce this measure and, as the Home Secretary had confirmed the new Government's intention of backing the programme agreed with their predecessors, it would be most unwise to try to avoid meeting this obligation however difficult it might be to implement. It was agreed that the Minister of Finance would arrange a meeting of officials of the Departments concerned to consider ways and means of establishing an adjudicatory-conciliatory body to deal with complaints.

10. LICENSING BILL

The Minister of Home Affairs secured agreement to the presentation of the Licensing Bill on Thursday, 9 July.

11. PARTY BUSINESS

Members proceeded to discuss their attitude to the meeting of the Standing Committee of the Unionist Council which had been requisitioned for the following day (8 July).



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