

1970/38

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CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE
ON MONDAY, 20 JULY 1970, AT 3 00 PM

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 Secretary to the Cabinet
 The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet
 The Private Secretary to the Prime Minister

1. DISCUSSIONS IN LONDON: 17 JULY 1970

The Prime Minister gave his colleagues an account of his meeting with Mr Heath and of the discussions which he and the Minister of Home Affairs had had with the Home Secretary and Minister of State. In the course of these discussions the following principal matters had been raised:-

- (i) Respective roles of Army and police in riot situations:
 The Home Secretary had agreed to discuss these in detail at an early date with the Minister of Home Affairs, the Minister of State for Defence, the GOC (NI) and the Chief Constable.
- (ii) Restoration of normal policing throughout Northern Ireland: The Prime Minister had emphasized the great importance of early action, which might be accompanied by measures to relieve the burden on the security forces in other directions. The Home Secretary would be discussing the matter urgently with his colleagues.
- (iii) Cessation of negotiations with ad hoc bodies: The Prime Minister had made the point that there should not be further negotiation or bargaining with bodies such as "Citizens' Defence Committees".

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(iv) Possible suspension of trial by jury in certain cases:
The Home Secretary had been informed of the view expressed by the Lord Chief Justice that it might be necessary to consider in certain cases trial by a panel of High Court Judges. This, of course, would be a matter for Westminster. The Home Secretary agreed to give the matter some thought, but said his first reaction was that this would represent a very extreme course.

(v) Gestures to the "minority": The Home Secretary had asked whether firmer action on the law-and-order front could be coupled with any further gesture. The Prime Minister had replied that in his view the Incitement to Hatred Bill had just about exhausted legislative remedies, while the Minister of Home Affairs had observed that Westminster assistance in providing additional employment in the North West would be more effective than any gesture. They had both rejected as politically impracticable a suggestion by the UK representative for joint UDR/Irish Army Border patrols.

2. THE LAW AND ORDER SITUATION

The Minister of Home Affairs reported to his colleagues a further strengthening of policing in the Belfast "B" district. He outlined the situation in relation to Londonderry, including the urgent need for further police accommodation, which his colleagues agreed should be provided as soon as possible. He stressed that the maintenance of adequate policing in difficult areas would make it most desirable to avoid committing the security forces in other ways.

After further discussion it was agreed that concrete decisions as to future policy must await the Joint Security Committee's consideration of an Army/Police Assessment, and a reaction from London on the matters discussed with the Home Secretary.

It was agreed that for the moment no publicity should be sought for the build-up in "B" district, although representative Back-benchers and others might be taken round the area to see what was happening.

3. EXPLOSIVE OUTRAGES

The Minister of Home Affairs said that in general the RUC were

satisfied with the existing powers for control and supervision of explosives. In any case it had to be recognised that supplies could all too easily come in from the South, where control was less strict, by unapproved routes. Ministers expressed the view that representations should be made to London to suggest that they might take up with the Republic the desirability of more effective controls there.

The Minister of Home Affairs also informed his colleagues that the serialisation of sticks of gelignite was still under consideration, but many difficulties were foreseen.

In the course of subsequent discussion, the following aspects were touched upon:-

(i) Possibility of Internment: The Minister of Home Affairs said that this possibility was kept under regular review, but hitherto the view had been taken that the adverse repercussions would outweigh any likely benefit. It also had to be acknowledged that, with the Army so deeply involved in the security situation, action of this sort could not be taken without consultation with Whitehall.

(ii) Rewards for Information: It was agreed that the Minister of Home Affairs should raise again with the police the possibility of a very substantial increase in the reward offered for information leading to the conviction of those responsible for explosions, and that he should be authorised to make such an increase if he decided to do so after discussion; it was also agreed that consideration should be given by the police to paying rather more substantial sums for information which might have some, even though indirect, bearing on the detection of offenders in this field.

4. THE DOCK STRIKE

The Minister of Home Affairs outlined the overall situation, the Minister of Agriculture explained the serious difficulties in relation to farm produce, and the Minister of Health and Social Services referred to attempts to secure some Union flexibility, which were still going on.

The decision of Ministers was that in view of the impact on agriculture, the situation could not be allowed to develop beyond Thursday, 23 July. If by then no substantial relief had been achieved through Union channels, it would be essential to have it established that the Army would load agricultural produce in

Northern Ireland and unload it in Great Britain. Accordingly exploratory moves should begin at once, without publicity, to determine what needed to be done and to warn the UK authorities of the decision of policy which might have to be taken. The Cabinet agreed that the timing of a Proclamation of Emergency should be decided by the Prime Minister and the Ministers of Home Affairs, Health and Social Services and Agriculture.

5. PROPOSED CHANGES IN NATIONAL INSURANCE

On consideration of the Minister of Health and Social Services' Memorandum of 10 July 1970 the Leader of the House advised that the wording of any announcement on action in anticipation of enactment should be carefully cleared with the Clerks to avoid any risk of breach of privilege.

The proposals were approved.

6. INDECENT ADVERTISEMENTS (AMENDMENT) BILL

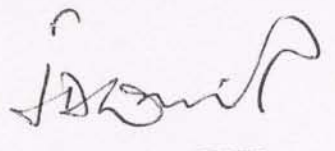
The Cabinet agreed to the preparation of legislation on the lines proposed in the Minister of Health and Social Services' Memorandum of 10 July 1970.

7. COMMITTEE OF PRIVILEGES

The Committee having requested that a Minister should appear before them on 27 July 1970 to give evidence on the circumstances in which information as to the contents of a Bill might have "leaked" before publication, it was agreed that the Leader of the House should ask for a postponement to a date on which he could appear. If the Committee nevertheless wished to proceed on 27 July 1970 the Minister of Finance would give evidence.

8. VISIT ABROAD

There being no comments by Ministers, the visit notified by the Secretary to the Cabinet's Memorandum of 7 July 1970 was approved.


18/8/70