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NOTE OF A MEETING OF THE FUTURE POLICY GROUP HELD IN STORMONT CASTLE ON
TUESDAY, 31 OCTOBER, AT 12 NOON

PRESENT:	Sir David Holden	Central Secretariat (in the Chair)
	Sir William Niell	Northern Ireland Office
	Sir Harold Black	Central Secretariat
	Mr K P Bloomfield	" "
	Mr R H Kidd	Ministry of Finance
	Mr K R Shimeld	" " "
	Mr J G Hill	Ministry of Home Affairs
	Mr N Dugdale	Ministry of Health and Social Services
	Mr P Shea	Ministry of Education
	Mr J A Young	Ministry of Agriculture
	Mr A C Brooke	Ministry of Commerce
	Mr P A Sythes	Ministry of Development
	Mr W Slinger	Ministry of Community Relations
	Mr W A Leitch	First Parliamentary Draftsman

In attendance: Mr L S Duncan - Central Secretariat

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Sir William Niell prefaced his remarks by explaining how the need to commute between London and Belfast and the inescapable preoccupation with security matters had prevented his meeting with the FPG as often as he would have wished.

2. DEBATE ON THE QUEEN'S SPEECH

Sir William took the view of the meeting about the proposed content of the speech - insofar as it affected Northern Ireland - to be made by the Prime Minister later in the day during the debate on the Queen's Speech.

3. GREEN PAPER "THE FUTURE OF NORTHERN IRELAND"

Sir William recapitulated on the main political and security developments of the previous six months and disposed of various allegations commonly made about the intentions and achievements of the UK Government. Turning to the Green Paper, he took it to be a statement of the parameters within which the Government could establish a new political structure for Northern Ireland, ie rejecting both the concepts of a United Ireland and of total integration within the United Kingdom. Much of the content of the Green Paper would be recognisable to the meeting as drawn from the three papers submitted by the FPG which had been a most welcome contribution to the study.

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Further contributions were also welcome but he could not ask for them formally at this stage as the Government could not anticipate the considered responses of the various political parties to the Green Paper and until these had been received and analysed he could not give any precise terms of reference for a further study. He would forecast, however, that until Army strength had been reduced to something approaching its former "peace time" level it would be unwise to look for any delegation of major security powers to a new Northern Ireland Assembly. If Permanent Secretaries wished to work from any reasonable assumptions in relation to general political matters or to produce specific recommendations on specialised or technical matters, the Secretary of State would, he felt sure, be most anxious to have them.

A general discussion ensued during which the following were identified as possible areas for detailed study.

1. Legislative powers of new Assembly.
2. Need for separate legislation and administration in relation to matters where parity prevailed.
3. Relationships between the new Assembly and the Courts.
4. Financial powers and inter-exchequer relationships.
5. Bill of Rights.
6. Implications of constitutional change for Northern Ireland Civil Service and related public bodies.

Sir William Nield concluded by offering to make arrangements for the considered views - as opposed to TV utterances etc - of the political parties to be made available to the Group to assist them in their deliberations.

Sir David Holden brought the meeting to a close by thanking Sir Willian Nield for talking to the Group and said that he was about to circulate a paper on Item 6 above. He suggested that Permanent Secretaries should consider further "technical" subjects for study by the Group.

Date of next meeting - The next meeting was arranged for 3 pm on Friday, 10 November. Location would be notified later.

L S DUNCAN

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Distribution:

Sir Wm Nield
Mr Cairncross
Sir David Holden
Sir Harold Black
Mr Howard-Drake
Mr Bloomfield
Mr Kidd
Mr Shimeld
Mr Hill
Mr Young
Mr Shea
Mr Brooke
Dr Oliver
Mr Dugdale
Mr Slinger
Mr Leitch
Dr Donaldson
Mr Trevelyan
Mr Steele
Mr Jordan

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