

Copies to: Lord Windlesham
Mr Channon
Mr Howell
Sir William ~~Field~~
Mr Woodfield
Mr Cairncross
Mr Howard-Drake
Permanent Secretaries (NI)

POLITICAL SETTLEMENT: THE "IRISH DIMENSION"

SECRETARY OF STATE

1. On 7 August and 25 August respectively, Sir David Holden submitted to you Papers prepared by Northern Ireland Permanent Secretaries, under the umbrella of the Future Policy Group, on "A Devolutionary Solution" and "An Integration Solution". In Sir David's absence, I now submit a third Paper (Political Settlement: The "Irish Dimension") which completes this phase of our work.
2. In doing so, my colleagues wish me to underline the very great importance which they attach to this final aspect of their study. Whether, in the end, arrangements for the internal government of Northern Ireland are made on devolutionary or on integration lines, we are wholly persuaded that no settlement will "stick" for more than a brief period if it does not tackle the fundamental and underlying problem of the relationship between the United Kingdom and Ireland, of which the Northern Ireland problem is an aspect.
3. You will see that our proposals involve the use of future plebiscites. We have not dealt directly with the more or less imminent plebiscite to which you are committed, but it is inherent in what we say that many of us feel deep anxiety about a plebiscite on a simple "Yes or No" basis. We may wish to take the opportunity to express further views on this aspect.
4. Now that the three Papers have been circulated, all of us would greatly welcome an opportunity for a discussion with you and with the other NI Office Ministers on the ground which we have sought to cover.

H. Black

H BLACK

8 September 1972

Central Secretariat
Stormont Castle

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