

## INFORMATION POLICY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF A MEETING HELD AT 3.00PM ON 3 FEBRUARY 1975 IN STORMONT CASTLE

1. Mr Cudlipp was in the chair. Apologies for absence were received from Mr Roberts, Mr Webster and Mr Allan.
2. The meeting began with a short discussion on the Paper on "Undermining the IRA". The paper had gone to PUS. It was pointed out that the projects outlined would require some resources and Mr Seaman agreed to look into them.
3. The chief subject of discussion was Mr Roberts' paper on "Propoganda Overseas". It was agreed that the chief problem lay in the United States where highly coloured IRA propoganda found a receptive market amongst the ethnic Irish. The British Government view, and that of the moderate majority often went by default because of the lack of staff in British Information Services and the lack of authentic moderate Irish voices. The Embassy was well enough briefed and did good work at higher level. However there was a need for a moderate presence on local radio stations and TV.
4. Various suggestions were made as to how the British Government line could be put over. It was suggested that visiting businessmen from GB or Ulster might be encouraged to speak. However, while they might be sympathetic to the Government view, they could not be expected to put over the Government line. Americans with Ulster connections suffered from the same disadvantage and in addition might put over a militant protestant view. Both might well be considered stooges. The most effective publicity would come from British politicians whose time was unfortunately limited. People such as Bishop Daly, who spoke out against terrorism but who were not Government creatures, would also be effective because they were well known. It was suggested that interviews with Ministers and others might be recorded in Belfast to be networked in the US.
5. Certain aspects of Ulster life were simply not known in the US. Neither the role of the Convention nor the true condition of detainees' families nor the position of the unoppressed majority nor the existence of the UDR was known.
6. On the question of links with the FCO it was agreed that there was not enough contact and that FCO should come to NI regularly to get to know what was going on. Adrian Turner was coming over shortly. There might be a case for a full-time representative in New York but it was not known whether the FCO would take kindly to yet another expert. There was probably a case for these in Belfast and those in the US to get together to discuss problems.
7. It was agreed that Mr Cudlipp and two members of the Committee-Mr Allan and Mr Seaman were suggested-should go to London to discuss these problems with the FCO at Under-Secretary level and that efforts should be made to increase contacts with Americans. In particular the Secretary of State might be invited to the American Embassy or an FPA party might be invited to NI.
8. Two points were raised at the end of the meeting. Firstly Mr Cudlipp reminded all present that the situation was delicate and that all statements should be cleared before issue and should not reflect value judgements. If information was needed it should be requested but no general briefing could be given. Also he remarked that it would be useful to have telex links direct to newspapers by which emergency statements could be relayed directly to papers without being subbed by the Press Association.

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D A HILL  
12 February 1975

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