

Note of a meeting of Permanent Secretaries held in Mr Kidd's room at 5.00 pm on Thursday 12 May 1977

Present:-

Mr Kidd

Mr Brooke
Mr Dugdale
Mr Young
Mr Bell

Mr Shimeld
Mr Irvine
Mr Bloomfield
Mr Finney

Mr Palmer

1. Meetings

ESC meetings had been discontinued. It was agreed that there should be no further ^{d.a.m} Permanent Secretaries meetings, unless the need arose to reconvene them.

2. General Situation

The crisis at Ballylumford seemed to have passed. Citybus services were still suspended. It would be an important sign of a return to normality to have the buses back on the road quickly.

3. Social Security

The North Howard Street Office had been unable to cope for part of the morning with the extra volume of claims and it had been proposed to switch the traffic to Frederick Street. After representations it had been decided to soldier on with North Howard Street, though claimants had been advised that they could forego a long wait, if they signed on at Frederick Street. Pressure was expected to mount tomorrow and Local Offices would be open at the week-end for the processing of claims. Lord Melchett's press statement had been issued earlier today.

4. Construction Industry

Mr Bell reported that Works Division had been approached by "Project", the journal of the Building industry, for material on the state of the building industry. He had advised Works Division that they should keep closely in touch with Mr Burnison of the Federation of Building and Civil Engineering Contractors on any statement which they proposed to issue. Statements on the industry should be made in fairly broad brush terms.

Contractors were still having difficulty in collecting cement supplies from Magheramorne. NIHE were also worried about the dearth of cement.

5. Aftermath of UUAC "strike"

It had been agreed that recent successes on the economic front had helped the Government's cause during the "strike". PUS hoped that the impetus could be maintained in the economic and social field in the aftermath of the strike. The Secretary of State would be looking to make a further stream of announcements on the economy after the "strike" was over. Mr Bell reported that he would be reviewing the possibilities and would be circulating a note to Departments.

Some examples of ongoing work which might lead to early announcements were:

- (a) MIES; EEC transition arrangements for the Milk Fund;
- (b) a £20 million hospital scheme in the Northern Board area;
- (c) the last of the post budget DMS employment packages;
- (d) projects to be financed by ^{the}inner cities allocation to Londonderry;

Mr Palmer reported that the next BAN meeting would be held on Tuesday of next week. It was agreed that this month's unemployment figures would have to be carefully analysed.

6. Analysis of failure of UUAC "strike"

There was a brief discussion on why the UUAC strike had failed. The major reason was probably the fact that unlike the 1974 UWC strike the UUAC had no single clear objective to unite the various shades of Unionist opinion. Another important factor was the contrast in the economic backgrounds between 1974 and 1977. In the present uncertain economic atmosphere men were afraid of losing their jobs; (recent closures of major firms had highlighted all too clearly to them the looming ^{threat} of unemployment. Inflation had also taken its toll; women were not as able to lay in supplies as they had in 1974. The sustained support given to the community by the security forces and the united approach of Government to the "strike" were also critical factors. Government could not afford

however, to be complacent. There was a borderline section of the "Unionist" community who might have been swayed either way in the "strike". It was also likely that the UUAC would search for alternative means of registering their protest eg a rents or rates strike.

It was also essential that moves on the political front did not proceed too far ahead of moves of the security front, else Government might not be able to counter a repeat performance by the UUAC with the same unity as had prevailed during the present crisis.

M. T. H. Maxwell

M T H MAXWELL
PS/Mr Kidd

13 May 1977

- cc PS/PUS
- Mr Pritchard
- Dr Quigley
- Mr Ford
- Mr Roberts