

CONFIDENTIAL

Dr D J Sloan

cc Mr Hannigan
Mr Irvine
Mr Dugdale
Mr Barry
Dr Weir
Mr Gilliland
Mr Truesdale
Dr McKeown

PUBLICITY FOR THE MEDICAL ROLE IN PRISONS

My only comment on your draft statement circulated on 10 September 1979 is that I would prefer to see the word "campaign" used in place of "protest". The latter implies that these prisoners' action is defensive, while the former suggests a more deliberately aggressive stance.

2. If accepted, this would involve the deletion of the words "protest action" in lines 1 and 2 of paragraph 3, and the insertion of "dirty campaign"; and the deletion of "protest" in line 4 of paragraph 5, and the word "campaign" being inserted.



HOWARD BEATTIE
11 September 1979

rd

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr S C Jackson (NIO)


Mr N Dugdale

Mr J F Irvine

✓ Dr R A McKeown

PUBLICITY FOR THE MEDICAL ROLE IN PRISONS AND PRISON PROTESTS

Attached is a further draft statement on the medical role, which attempts to cover a wider field than the draft statement originally prepared last year and revised by Mr Jackson. Perhaps recipients of this minute would consider this suggested approach before we meet the Minister on Friday.



D J SLOAN
10 September 1979

copy to: Mr Hannigan
Dr Weir
Mr Barry
Mr Gilliland
Mr Truesdale
Mr Beattie

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

REVISED DRAFT STATEMENT ON THE MEDICAL ROLE IN PRISONS AND PRISON PROTESTS

Prison inmates in Northern Ireland have access to medical facilities equivalent to those available to the general population. Medical staff attached to the prisons provide primary medical care and can call in consultants to give specialised advice and treatment when this is indicated. Prisoners are also referred when necessary to outside hospitals for out-patient treatment or for admission.

The doctors concerned with prisoners' health observe the same professional ethical principles as apply to the treatment of any other patients. In particular, treatment which is considered advisable in a prisoner's own interest is not forced upon him against his will. While prisoners can, therefore, deny themselves the medical care which is readily available by refusing to co-operate with the medical staff in or outside the prison, medical care is never denied a prisoner on disciplinary grounds.

Certain prisoners in the Maze prison have been indulging in a so-called ^{dirty} protest ^{campaign} action in support of their demands for special status. The Secretary of State has made it clear that the Government will not yield to these demands. the continued concerted actions of these prisoners in using their own excreta, urine and waste food to foul their cells and the areas outside the cells are, as far as I am aware, unprecedented in a civilised society. Their objective is to create disgusting and unhygienic conditions, apparently with total disregard of the consequent risks to health.

At an early stage of the "protest" a number of special measures were introduced, in consultation with the Governor of the prison and with the advice of the Prison Medical Service, to deal with the situation. As regards general health measures, procedures not previously needed in ordinary prison conditions have had to be employed; for example, regular vacating and steam-cleaning of the cells have

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

for some time been part of the routine for the cell-blocks involved. The cells are now being cleaned every few days and the walls are repainted after each fourth cleaning.

The full range of medical services is available to the prisoners taking part in the ^{caulair} protest, including a daily sick parade in each block and the availability day and night of a medical officer and hospital officers. It is, however, part of the ^{caulair} ^{the} protest that prisoners generally are unco-operative with the clinical staff and with the other prison staff. The cells are visited at least once a week by a prison medical officer to monitor the internal conditions and to observe the personal hygiene standards and the inmates' health, so far as this is practicable. It is not possible, without coercion, to maintain the same standards of clinical care for prisoners who reject it as for the generality of prisoners who co-operate in necessary procedures recommended for their own welfare. Should the action of individual prisoners cause an unacceptable health hazard to other inmates, prison officers or the community, the authorities would take whatever measures were needed, on medical advice, to counter this risk. It is not the practice, nor is it the intention, to force medical care upon any prisoner for his own individual benefit. Despite the conditions which the prisoners have been creating since March 1978 there has so far been no evidence of any resulting illness.

Prisoners who reject normal hygienic standards of behaviour, and who refuse to co-operate in medical examination or treatment indicated for their individual welfare, do so at their own risk, and the consequences are entirely their own responsibility. I hope this is clearly understood by these prisoners and by those outside the prison who are directing or supporting the protest.

I shall continue to monitor closely the conditions in the cell-blocks concerned, and in the light of medical advice to take appropriate measures to control the health risks.

CONFIDENTIAL