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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
DUNDONALD HOUSE
UPPER NEWTOWNARDS ROAD
BELFAST BT4 3SU

PS/Mr Alison

MEETING WITH ALDERMAN HUGH SMYTH OF THE PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY ON MONDAY 15 DECEMBER AT 11.00AM

Mr Smyth telephoned the Minister's Belfast Office on Wednesday 10 December to ask for a meeting to discuss Loyalist disruption in the H blocks. At the same time he asked for three "welfare officers", Messrs J Irvine, J McDonald and J Graham, to be allowed to pay a visit to a particular prisoner in Cellular Maze, H L T Murphy, but this request was refused.

2. A note on Mr Smyth and his background is attached. He has asked to bring with him a Mr Jim Irvine and a Mr Ken Heffernan, but advice is being submitted separately that these two should not be seen by the Minister.

3. There are at present 23 Protestant prisoners at Maze who are taking part in the clean blanket protest; 143 others are refusing to work. Six Protestant prisoners began their much-heralded hunger strike today Friday 12 December. This has been presented as a UDA exercise (see the attached copy of the statement issued on UDA notepaper on 3 December). The names of the prisoners concerned are

W J Mullan	Life Imprisonment
T Andrews	" "
N Earle	" "
S McClean	12 years
S Courtney	8 years
R Adams	8 years

4. Although Mr Smyth will presumably be interceding on behalf of the UVF, the role played by this organisation at present is unclear. A number of the clean blanket protesters are of course members of this organisation and UVF men have participated in this form of protest from the start. The Minister will recall that the number of loyalist protesters has, until very recently rarely exceeded a dozen. Although all the hunger strikers are UDA affiliated, a number of those refusing to work are known to have UVF connections. There is also a threat that the UVF will commence disruption of its own from Monday 15 December

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Considerable intimidation has already taken place in the prison - it is believed from both organisations - to ensure a healthy number of Loyalists protesting by refusal to work. As for the seriousness of the strike the Minister will have seen the intercepted letter from W Mullan ('leader' of the hunger strike) - copy attached-which shows that the Loyalists have made a purely opportunist move and apparently have no intention of starving themselves to death.

5. Line to take

Mr Alison will presumably wish to hear what Mr Smyth has to say and in response point out the Government's current stand in relation to the Republican hunger strike. Exactly the same arguments apply in relation to the Loyalist strike - there is no question of political status or segregation (which though not ostensibly demanded by the Republicans is an essential concomitant of political status). Nevertheless the Government will continue to run a humane regime and will consider any genuine proposals for penal reform which do not involve granting of special privileges to any group. The fact that the leaders of the UDA - and presumably the UVF - have not welcomed the strike is essentially immaterial. The Government will not get them off the hook by conceding special status and it is for the prisoners or their organisations to decide to end the hunger strike.

AN Completion

for.

S C JACKSON

12 December 1980

CC Miss MacGlashan
Mr Gee
Mr Buxton
(without
enclosures)

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