

cc PS/PUS (B&L)
 Mr Blelloch
 Mr Ranson
 Mr Wyatt
 Mr Burns

Mr Barry
 Mr Palmer
 Mr Gilliland
 Mr Jackson
 Mr McKay

NOTE OF A MEETING ON THE MAZE PRISON PROTEST ON 2 MARCH 1981

Progress of the Protest

1. It was confirmed that one prisoner, Sands, had been refusing food since yesterday. He had today asked to be moved to a single clean cell with bedding and this had been done. Sands is due to receive a statutory visit on 3 March from 3 visitors, one of whom has been identified as a journalist for the "Guardian", David Beresford.

2. In addition to this action Republican prisoners on the "dirty" protest have indicated that they will be coming off this protest and have asked to be moved to clean cells with bedding. It is expected that 250 prisoners will be in clean cells by tonight and the remainder by Wednesday. This could however be delayed by industrial action by the POA which is trying to negotiate a "golden handshake" to compensate for the loss of special payments for cell cleaning etc. It was confirmed that prisoners have not as yet requested furniture for their clean cells.

Action in hand

3. A brief low-key press release responding to a statement by the prisoners about their change of tactics has been issued. The Secretary of State will be making a statement tomorrow. It has yet to be decided if this will be written or oral, although the advice of officials is that it should be the former. A decision on whether this statement should be sent to interested parties together with the press release has still to be decided.

Communications with Prisoners

4. Mr Barry's paper on this subject was discussed. The two contentious areas were visits by lawyers and special visits. On visits by lawyers it was agreed that these would have to be permitted but that action should be taken to query visits to the same prisoner by more than one lawyer; that an attempt should be

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made to discourage weekend visits; and that a full record of visitors should be kept. As far as special visits were concerned it was agreed that requests would be considered in the light of prevailing circumstances.

Future Work

5. It was agreed that Messrs Barry, Palmer and Jackson should prepare a progress report for Ministers. There was considerable discussion on what line should be taken on whether or not prisoners moving into clean cells should also be entitled to receive furniture. It was agreed that the initial line should be that furniture should not be placed in cells at present, but that the matter would be considered on its merits if a special request was made.

x / 6. It was agreed that a further paper should be prepared on the question of furniture including matters such as availability and staff reaction which would form the basis of a long term decision on this issue.

x - see Mr Barry's paper
of 2 March 1981

R. Duffy
A B MACKAY
2 March 1981