

NOTE OF A MEETING ON THE MAZE PRISON PROTEST, MONDAY 30 MARCH 1981

Situation in Prison

1. The general situation remains quiet and there has been no change in the condition of the hunger strikers.

Fermanagh/South Tyrone By-Election

2. It was reported that Sands had given his consent for the election at some stage (probably during a visit by his solicitor) and was now a candidate in the election. He has appointed an election agent, a Mr Owen Carron, and intends to stand as an Anti H-Blocks/Armagh Political Prisoner.

3. It was accepted that Sands's candidature was likely to pose particular problems in relation to the prison administration. The principal difficulties would relate to access to the prisoner by, for instance, his election agent. It also seemed likely that the media would demand access in order to fulfil the criteria of impartiality during an election campaign. While it was accepted that the authorities would have some measure of control as Sands is now under medical supervision it was agreed that it would be very difficult to treat him as an ordinary prisoner during this period. It was agreed that the possible consequences should be considered urgently and a paper prepared for Wednesday's meeting which would form the basis of our advice which might be given to the Governor on this subject.

Situation Outside the Prisons

4. It was reported that the support for the hunger strikers remains low-key. Demonstrations continue to be thinly attended and generally peaceful.

Publicity

5. In the absence of Mr Wyatt and Mr Gilliland there was no report on the possibility of a PQ to cover the release of the leaflet on prison regime which had been discussed at Friday's meeting. It was agreed that the release of prisoners as a result of decision on restoration of remission should not be the subject of even a brief press notice but should be regarded as routine.

A.B. MacKay  
A B MacKay

30 March 1981

cc PS/PUS (B&L)  
Mr Blelloch (OR)  
Mr Ranson  
Mr Wyatt  
Mr Eurns  
Mr Gilliland

Mr Palmer ✓  
Mr Jackson  
Mr Davenport  
Mr MacKay