

**CONFIDENTIAL**

POSITION IN THE PRISONS

Points to make

1. The situation in Maze and the other prisons continues to be quiet.
2. The changes announced on 6 October have proceeded smoothly.
3. All but a handful of the protesting prisoners in Maze (almost certainly all by 6 November) have received their own clothes and are wearing them.
4. All who have their clothes are taking their daily exercise and their meals in the dining rooms.
5. The Government has made its position on all aspects - clothing, extended opportunity for association in the H blocks and partial restoration of lost remission - absolutely plain in public statements. There is no justification for suggestions that the prisoners are unclear on any point.
6. A considerably reduced scale of punishments has been introduced for prisoners who continue to refuse to make themselves available for the full range of prison work.
7. The hunger strike was a tragic episode. It is now behind us. We earnestly hope that we can all now concentrate our minds on the many other problems facing Northern Ireland and its people.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

**CONFIDENTIAL**

POSITION IN THE PRISONS

Background

X Following the ending of the hunger strike on 3 October the Secretary of State made a full statement on 6 October announcing the following changes in the prison regime for all sentenced prisoners:-

- (i) all prisoners to be allowed to wear their own clothes at all times;
- (ii) extension of association arrangements to allow controlled association between adjacent H block wings (to start when the necessary structural changes had been made); and
- (iii) restoration of 50% lost remission after a period of 3 months' conformity.

2. Subsequently the Minister of State, Lord Gowrie, made detailed public statements explaining the changes. These were intended to make the position clear to all concerned - the prisoners and people outside - and to avoid the risk of misunderstanding and possible accusations later of "reneging" on the part of the Government. X

3. Deliveries of own clothing began on 12 October. Nearly all the protesting prisoners now have their own clothes and are wearing them. This means that they are able to take their daily exercise (outdoors, weather permitting) and to go the dining halls for their meals.

4. A number of former protesters who had completed 3 months' conformity have already been released under the new, more generous arrangements for restoring lost remission. Good progress is being made with the additional security gates required before the wing-to-wing association can start.

**CONFIDENTIAL**

5. So far the arrangements have gone smoothly. 36 prisoners, 4 in each of the 9 "wings" housing the non-conforming prisoners, have been nominated by the prison Governor for orderly duties. Since they are doing the full range of normal block orderly work they are now "conformers". Allegations that the orderlies have been selected by the paramilitary leadership in the prison are without foundation.

6. Work remains the sensitive area, however. As a first step the Governor is starting to offer the non-conforming prisoners the normal series of assessment interviews and tests given to newly-committed prisoners at Maze. These are intended to determine the prisoners' educational attainment, aptitudes and preferences and to assist the authorities in placing the prisoners in suitable day-time tasks. It remains to be seen how the prisoners will react to the assessment procedures.

7. A considerably reduced scale of punishments has been introduced for those prisoners who continue to commit the offence of refusing to work (by refusing to make themselves available for the full range of duties). This will mean that they will no longer lose all their remission, will get 3 visits a month - compared with the 4 granted to fully conforming prisoners - and half the opportunities for association allowed to conformers.

8. A further note will be available for the meeting on 6 November giving the up-to-date position.