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Mr Ingram

15/1/86

REF: PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS - DUP TAKEOVER OF TELEPHONE SWITCHBOARD

1. I should like to document this Branch's involvement in the incident which arose at Parliament Buildings on 15 May 1986 when a group of DUP Assembly Members managed to occupy the telephone switchboard room in Parliament Buildings. When this occurred anyone telephoning to Parliament Buildings was informed that the DUP had taken over the building as a protest against the Anglo Irish Agreement.
2. The first indication I had that anything might occur on 15 May was a telephone conversation with Mr Noel Cornick, NIO at around 4.00pm on 14 May 1986. He advised me that information from the "grapevine" was that a loyalist-type demonstration was anticipated in the Stormont/Parliament Buildings region on 15 May as this was the six months anniversary of the signing of the Anglo Irish Agreement. I immediately passed on this information to Mr J Sharpe, Departmental Security staff, DOE, Parliament Buildings and also to Mr Martin, DFP, Establishment Branch as well as advising you of the situation.
3. I then contacted RUC Stormont where I spoke to Superintendent McFarland. I told him the information which I had received. He responded that he had no inkling of any protest action and subsequently (at approx 05/15pm) I received a call from RUC Stormont indicating that they had checked with their information sources but there was no confirmation of any message. I responded that I had no reason to doubt the credibility of my informant and the matter rested.
4. This morning I received a telephone message from Mr Hamilton, Deputy Departmental Security Officer, DOE, Parliament Buildings, who advised me that a large group (20-25) of DUP Assembly Members were roaming the administrative corridors of Parliament Buildings. He told me that together with his colleague Mr Sharpe he had commenced work at 8.00am this morning in order to be available should any incident occur. The Assembly Members endeavoured to enter Mr Needham's suite on the third floor, Parliament Buildings but due to the prior warning the doors had been locked and they were unable to gain access. They subsequently returned to the Assembly floors and the next information available was that they had occupied the switchboard room in the basement having asked the girls to vacate. I gave you this information at approximately 9.45am, when you advised that action should be taken to remove the intruders, and on returning to my office received a telephone call from Mr Bloomfield who stated that the Secretary of State had spoken to him and advised that these people should be removed from the switchboard room as quickly as possible. I then contacted DOE Private Office but learned that Mr Barry was having a meeting with Mr Needham and consequently I was unable to speak to him. However, one of the staff conveyed Mr Bloomfield's message to him and it was agreed that action should proceed as indicated. The Private Office advised their Security Personnel who had already summoned the police to the scene. For the next hour or so I endeavoured to keep up to date with developments. This included telephoning RUC Stormont and DOE Parliament Buildings. I was advised that the local police were awaiting a directive from their own command to move against the demonstrators. At this stage I telephoned Brooklyn in an attempt to speak to the Deputy Chief Constable M McAtamney but, as he was at a meeting, I was unable to communicate with him. The person I

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spoke to transferred my call to Inspector David Matchette in the Assistant Chief Constable Operations Division who was able to advise me that Assistant Chief Constable Steenson, Commander, Belfast, had taken personal charge of the situation at Stormont. A subsequent telephone conversation with Stormont RUC confirmed this situation. I indicated to those police officers to whom I spoke the urgency of the situation and the level from which the directive had come for action to be taken.

5. DOE Private Office obligingly kept me advised of developments and at approximately 11.30am they told me that the police had spoken to the occupants of the room asking them to vacate the premises. I understand that the request was repeated at least twice but the occupants refused to comply. At approximately 11.45am the police commenced to physically break the door and the occupants filed out quietly at 11.55am. DOE security staff advised me that they have the names of the 12 people which will be passed to me in due course.
6. Also during the morning I had a number of conversations with Mr David Hill, NIO, Stormont House who indicated that he would have suggested a lower key approach and that Mr Innes was annoyed that the Secretary of State had chosen to communicate his views via Mr Bloomfield rather than through his NIO officials. I made the point that if these people had not been ejected the administrative function of Parliament Buildings was being totally blocked and the message they were giving to anyone calling in was not that the switchboard was out of action but that they had taken over the building. In my view this constituted at least as much propaganda as any measures to remove them.
7. When the operation was successfully completed I spoke to Mr Bloomfield's Private Office staff and left an appropriate message and as you know I informed you of the up-to-date situation also.
8. I have since spoken to Mr Ian Kirk, DOE and have arranged to call with him this afternoon so that we are fully au fait with all the developments. If there is anything further to report I will let you know in due course.



R H ROBINSON
15 May 1986

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