

CONFIDENTIAL

M. Davri

214/12

~~Mr Carson~~
MR Carson

- cc PS/Minister (L&B)
- Mr Ford
- Mr Loughran
- Mr Mackenzie
- Mr McCann
- Mr Whitlaw
- Mrs Brown

~~Mr N Hamilton~~
Central Secretariat

POLITICAL PROTEST ACTION

1. Sir Kenneth Bloomfield asked for monthly reports in relation to developments on the Political Protest Action Front. The following paragraphs illustrate the position at the end of December 1987.

2. MEMBERSHIP OF PUBLIC BODIES

Of the 3 Housing Council nominees to the Housing Executive Board, one attended the November Board meeting and the other 2 both apologised for not attending due to sickness. Two attended the December meeting.

3. DISTRICT COUNCIL ISSUES

i. Services are being provided in all council areas.

Unionist councillors in Belfast continue to employ tactics designed to exclude Sinn Fein members from participating in council business. Switching venues for meetings or physically preventing SF members from gaining entry to meetings appear to have given way to meetings which last only a few minutes and which push through items previously agreed by Unionist members.

Non-Unionist members have threatened to test the vires of such action.

Antrim, Coleraine, Lisburn and Castlereagh Councils have now received the Alliance Party's legal costs for the Judicial Reviews which it brought as a result of the adjournment policy. Once these have been paid - there is a query as to the amounts charged - the Local Government Auditor will decide what action to take and against whom.

A case of maladministration in Cookstown District Council has resulted in the Local Government Auditor writing to all the council members indicating his intention to surcharge them for wilful misconduct for the damages which the Council had to pay. (The amount involved is below that which could result in disqualification.)

ii. The position on the display of "Says No" banners by councils which was advised by the Department to remove them has been changing on almost a daily basis but currently is as follows:-

One council (Ballymena) has removed its banner.

Two councils (Castlereagh and Limavady) removed their banners and re-erected them inside the Council buildings. The display of advertisements inside buildings does not come under planning control, but legal advice is being sought in the case of Castlereagh because the banner is clearly visible outside the building.

Three councils (Antrim, Banbridge and Belfast) removed their banners but re-erected them elsewhere within Council property. The Belfast Council has been advised in writing to remove its banner advertisement forthwith. As it has not complied with this direction, a case is being prepared for the purpose of prosecution. Depending on the circumstances of each case, similar action is likely to be taken in respect of the Antrim and Banbridge Councils.

Three councils (Cookstown, Carrickfergus and Larne) have not removed their banners, but have submitted, or have indicated that they intend to submit, further applications for consent to display their banner advertisements. These applications have been, or will be, refused. Again depending on the circumstances of each case, summons action is likely to follow.

The deadline for removal of the banner by North Down Council expired on 23 December 1987. That Council has submitted a further application for consent to display the advertisement. This application will be refused.

No immediate action is contemplated in relation to the remaining councils which have banners on display (Craigavon, Lisburn and Newtownabbey) pending the outcome of appeals to the Planning Appeals Commission and, in the case of Lisburn, the issue of a refusal for further consent to display its banner.

4. NON-PAYMENT OF PUBLIC DEBT

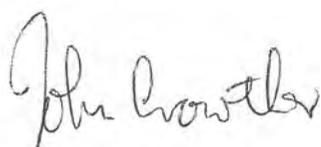
i. MOTOR TAX

The second case against Peter Robinson MP was heard at Belfast Petty Sessions Court on 8 December 1987. Mr Robinson did not attend and in his absence was fined £75, ordered to pay £100 arrears of duty and £3 court costs. He has 28 days in which to make payment. Failure to do so could lead to a term of imprisonment.

ii. RATES

Ken Maginnis MP appeared in court on 2 December and refused to pay his rates. He has been given a notice of intention that the matter is being referred to the Enforcement of Judgments Office.

5. A further report on developments will be provided on 29 January 1988.



J CROWTHER

30 December 1987