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NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE -
ABSENCES DURING UUAC STRIKE, 3-13 MAY 1977

1. I should like to report to you what we have done about NI civil servants who did not come to work during the UUAC strike. The number of Northern Ireland civil servants absent from work during the strike was a small proportion of the total workforce. Some 10,000 working days absence in total, including absences on sick leave, were reported.
2. The following action has already been taken:
 - (a) Officers who were sick, or were unable to get to work because of transport difficulties, (accounting for some 5,600 days) have been dealt with under the normal rules.
 - (b) Officers who admitted that they were absent because of sympathy with the strike have been reprimanded and forfeited pay for the absence(s). The numbers involved were small, about 240, including industrials.
 - (c) Officers who were on strike and actively participating, eg on picket line, etc, were treated as at (b) but, in addition, were subject to such further disciplinary penalty as was considered necessary according to the nature and degree of their involvement.

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3. The cases which presented the greatest problem were those in which it was alleged that intimidation was the reason for absence from work. (Loss of some 3,000 working days was incurred). Some people had reported this to the Police, others had not, and the latter cases were the most difficult. Our instructions to staff did not include any requirement to report intimidation to the Police and it is difficult to disprove allegations of intimidation because of the inherent nature of such activities. We have therefore concluded after full consideration of all the implications, including the action taken in unemployment benefit cases where if claims were to succeed it was necessary to report intimidation to the Police, that we should accept that where intimidation was alleged the people concerned should not suffer any loss of pay. This would be without any detailed investigation into the allegation of intimidation. I have also borne in mind the fact that the strike is now past history; re-opening matters might raise emotions again.
4. The PUS has seen, and agreed, our proposed line of action.
5. We are tightening up our rules to include a requirement that in future intimidation must be reported to the Police, if staff are to be paid for absence from work.

R. H. Kidd

R H KIDD

3 November 1977

Copies to:

PS/Ministers (B & L)

PS/PUS (B & L)

Mr Pritchard

Mr Dugdale

Mr Shimela ✓

Mr Waterfield

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