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NOTE OF A MEETING HELD ON FRIDAY 27 JUNE 1986 IN DUNDONALD HOUSE TO DISCUSS THE LOYALIST HUNGER STRIKE AT MAGILLIGAN PRISON

Present:

Mr Jackson

1. [REDACTED] thanked everyone for attending to discuss; the current hunger strike situation; the medical implications arising from the prisoners refusal to co-operate with medical/hospital staff; the prisoners 8 demands; and the handling of the PR dimension including the letter from prisoner [REDACTED] and one from [REDACTED]

2. Developments Since the Hunger Strike Began: 16 June 1986

[REDACTED] reported that 2 more prisoners had joined the protest on 23 June and the likely pattern would be that each week 2 more would join until the total reached 10 - a further 2 prisoners joined the protest on 30 June. Prisoners [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] who had begun the protest on 16 June, remained in their normal location until 23 June when they were moved to the Cell Block. This move was made because the prisoners were refusing to be medically examined or to be weighed. The prisoners' location in the Cell Block, not of course under punishment conditions but separating them from other prisoners, is intended to make observation of them easier. It was found on occasions that the prisoners' meals were being returned a few ounces lighter and it was thought that perhaps they were nibbling at the food. This possibility has been carefully looked into but the quantities involved were relatively small and the Governor is now not sure if in fact the prisoners had eaten any part of the meals. However, the suspicion remains that they are eating some of the tuck shop confectionery which they bought earlier in the week; although they claim these were to be given to the "kids during visits". The second 2 prisoners to join the protest [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] were also moved to the Cell Block on 30 June.

3. Medical Implications

Dr [REDACTED] said that at this stage the Medical Officer was not concerned about the prisoners' health but their refusal to be weighed or in any

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way medically examined made it difficult for their condition to be properly monitored. In the event of the prisoners deciding to prolong their action the Medical Officer would have to make a judgement as to when they should be moved to the prison hospital where their medical management could be properly taken care of. In past "fasts" admission to the hospital was made around day 21 but as these prisoners were refusing to be examined the doctor might consider it preferable to admit them somewhat sooner. Dr [REDACTED] advised that, if there were no individual complicating factors, the first critical stage would begin to occur around day 30. Dr [REDACTED] also mentioned that the Magilligan MO would be needed at Maze while the Medical Officer there was on leave for 2 weeks. During this time the medical service at Magilligan would be in the charge of an experienced part-time Medical Officer whom Dr [REDACTED] was confident would be able to deal appropriately with the prisoners' medical care. For the present the Medical Officer would continue to see the prisoners each day and he will liaise with the Governor as to the timing of their admission to the hospital.

4. Consideration of the Prisoners' Demands

Prisoners [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] on their first day had addressed separate notes to the Governor listing 8 demands. The 4 prisoners who had subsequently joined the protest had submitted somewhat lengthier notes covering essentially the same points. The meeting looked at the various complaints in turn and took the following view:-

i. Visits by Political Parties

This was no doubt related to the postponement of the DUP visit. The fact that this took place on 20 June demonstrated that there was no basis for this complaint.

ii. Clean Sheets

It was felt that this was not really a serious complaint. One clean sheet a week is entirely reasonable although Maze and Belfast find it possible to provide 2.

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iii. Counsel at Adjudications

This was a puzzling alleged grievance for the prisoners to have included. The courts have held that legal representation should not be available at Governors adjudications; it is for the BOV to decide whether to allow legal representation at adjudications before them.

iv. Purchases of Birthday/Christmas Cards out of Private Cash

The basis of this one was thought to have been related to the practice at Maze of allowing prisoners to trade back for confectionery etc the cost of a birthday card previously bought out of private cash. Tuck shop goods are paid for out a combination of all earnings and a fixed amount of private cash; and the prisoners evidently had caught on to the benefit of the Maze trade back system which has since been tightened up.

v. Seating Arrangements at Visits

The position here is that visitors will be allowed to sit beside prisoners when open visits - replacing the present booth type arrangements - are introduced at Magilligan in the Autumn.

vi. Exercise Periods

There were staff resource implications in allowing prisoners to use the dining halls for association when the weather was unsuitable for the one hour's daily exercise to take place in the yards. The use of the yards only needed one supervising officer per wing whereas the dining hall arrangement required one officer to supervise that area and an additional officer to supervise the adjoining toilets. It was agreed that we were rather exposed on this point. The Governor said he could not provide the additional cover from within present resources, he agreed to consider further

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the proposal that the prisoners would be given the option of deciding whether they wanted to go out to the yards in inclement weather or remain locked in their cells - at present the Chief Officer decides if the weather conditions are such that the yards are ruled out.

vii. End of Controlled Movement

It was felt that implimentation of the instructions to staff in this regard should continue to have our full support and no changes were contemplated.

viii. Association Time

There were practical problems in achieving the full 3 hours evening association because of staff availability and the difficulty of getting everyone out quickly with controlled movement. It was accepted that there was little scope at present for making any change in this area and our response should be that the existing periods of association were the most that could be achieved at the prison.

The regime in various establishments necessarily varies in some respects and we should draw attention to the positive features of Magilligan regime where there were facilities for work and for education in the normal class-room setting.

5. PR Considerations

There had so far been little media attention to the prisoners protest and we would continue to adopt a low profile on the matter. It was felt that the Minister's press statement on 19 June was sufficient public response to the present situation. The need for a further statement would be looked at again as the situation developed - the transfer of some of the prisoners to the prison hospital might be an appropriate time to make a further statement. Meanwhile a reply to [REDACTED]'s letter, couched in appropriately concilatory terms, would be drafted for the Private Secretary to send in a day or two. Consideration would also be given to the appropriate response to be given to [REDACTED]'s recent letter.

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6. General Points Covered

i. Republicans' Attitude

[REDACTED] reported that intelligence suggested that the Republicans were content to leave the Loyalists to make the running in this protest. For their part the Republicans would not be getting directly involved and they would continue to develop the pressure for segregation on the lines of the position at Maze but this would take the form of action outside the prison - the recent car bomb in Limavady was evidence of this. There were indications that such attacks would continue - the direction would not be against basic grade officers but on the "white shirts" and the Governor grades who were considered to be the prison policy makers.

ii. Staff Morale

[REDACTED] said that he judged staff morale to be good. He of course had only taken up Governorship at the prison a few days ago and he was very much finding his feet but he was confident that the staff would be able to cope with the difficulties of the present situation.

iii. Submission to the Minister

It was agreed that a further submission would be sent to Mr Scott to bring him up to date with the current situation.

[REDACTED]
30 June 1986

cc PS/Secretary of State (B & L)
PS/Mr Scott (B & L)
PS/PIIS (B & L)

[REDACTED]
Mr Stephens

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