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... I saw Mr. McAteer this morning and I attach for your information a copy of the note that has been made of our conversation. As you will see I was careful to follow the arrangements which we discussed last Monday.

The new factor that has arisen since we agreed that I should see Mr. McAteer was the announcement yesterday of the order made by the Minister of Home Affairs in Northern Ireland prohibiting meetings and parades within the walled city of Londonderry for a month. Mr. McAteer, protesting at the imposition of this ban, told me that the Civil Rights demonstration planned for Saturday would defy the ban.

As we agreed I informed Mr. McAteer that a note of the discussion would be sent to you and to the Prime Minister. Because of the situation that may develop in Londonderry over the weekend I feel sure that you will wish to arrange for the note to be sent to the Prime Minister at once.

There is one other point which I hope you will agree should be mentioned when this note is passed to the Prime Minister. Mr. McAteer renewed his suggestion that he should be received by the Prime Minister. He argues that the mere fact that he is received at the Home Office and - as he hopes - at No. 10 operates as a deterrent in Northern Ireland. I think he is right and that good might come from his seeing the Prime Minister, and I would suggest that the Prime Minister be asked if he will receive him. (No. 10 have indeed just replied to an earlier request by Mr. McAteer to the effect that the Prime Minister was glad that he was coming to see me.)

(SGD.) LORD STONHAM

14th November 1968

Note for the record

Lord Stonham today received Mr. E. McAteer, M.P., the Leader of the Nationalist Party in Northern Ireland. Mr. Cairncross and Mr. North of the Home Office were also present.

In welcoming Mr. McAteer, Lord Stonham said that, while he was very happy to agree to Mr. McAteer's request for a meeting, he must point out that Her Majesty's Government's official dealings in Northern Ireland affairs, must be strictly confined to the Northern Ireland Government. The conversations which had taken place between the Prime Minister and Captain O'Neill must remain confidential and he could not go beyond the statement which the Prime Minister had made in the House on 5th November, when he set out the five main areas covered in the discussion. He considered, however, that there was advantage in Mr. McAteer acquainting the Government, through Lord Stonham, of his views which Lord Stonham undertook to note and pass on to the Home Secretary and to the Prime Minister.

This Mr. McAteer fully understood and appreciated Lord Stonham's gesture in meeting him. Mr. McAteer first expressed his grave anxiety over Mr. Craig's further ban, for one month (under the Public Order Act), on demonstrations within the ancient walled city of Londonderry, and forecast that this would inevitably lead to more disturbances.

A Civil Rights march has been arranged for this coming Saturday (16th) and the organisers have no intention of cancelling it. The timing of the ban was a notable example of discrimination, coming immediately after a parade by Dr. Paisley and expiring in time for the celebrations on the 18th December, a significant day in the Orange calendar, to be held. Mr. McAteer considered the ban was indefensible, especially considering that at a recent count there were, within the walled city, 367 Catholic voters compared with 194 voters of all other parties - "the city was being reserved as an Orange stamping ground" and there was bound to be trouble on the 16th November if the ban was not lifted.

In discussing the disturbances Mr. McAteer made the point that there would not be, nor had there been, trouble between the Protestants and the Catholics in Londonderry. The trouble arose between the civil rights marchers and the police. In this connection he was particularly concerned about a statement (reported in the Londonderry Sentinel of 23rd October 1968) by a Senior Naval Officer at the Naval Base, H.M.S. Sea Eagle, that they would "always be pleased to assist in any way with the maintenance of law and order in Northern Ireland". Mr. McAteer wondered if it was fully understood in this country that British Naval Personnel could be used in this sort of manner.

Lord Stonham then asked Mr. McAteer why he thought it necessary to resign his position as Leader of the Opposition at Stormont. There seemed to be no advantages accruing from this indeed it might create some embarrassment for us in agreeing to discuss Northern Ireland affairs with him. Also, while he could not be taken to be offering any bargaining position, he would be interested to know what changes in the Northern Ireland scene would persuade Mr. McAteer to change his mind.

In reply Mr. McAteer made the following points:

- (a) that the Nationalist Party had not gone out of opposition but had simply suspended their duties. The course of action had been taken after a unanimous decision of the Parliamentary Party;
- (b) apart from himself, the Nationalist Members of Parliament had now resumed their seats in the House;
- (c) he could personally see that there would come a time when the Nationalist Party must resume their official responsibilities. He was prepared to do this when there was any real evidence of intention or indeed willingness, on behalf of the Northern Ireland Government, to deal with the Nationalist Party as a responsible opposition. He complained that this had never happened in the past, to his deep regret. He had risked his

political career by taking up the leadership of the official opposition and would have liked this gesture to have been recognised in some way. His approaches to the Prime Minister had been to no avail, and his warnings about possible repercussions from the Government's actions ignored. (Mr. Mcateer said that both he and Captain O'Neill were "Middle of the roaders" and as such it was his deepest hope that Captain O'Neill would regard him as a man in whom he could confide and discuss mutual difficulties. His position in relation to some members of the Nationalist Party was exactly the same as that of Captain O'Neill in relation to his, although on a smaller scale. Indeed at a brief interview between the two Captain O'Neill had said "the logic is on your side Eddy, but that is all I can manage".);

- (d) that Captain O'Neill's apparent reluctance to introduce reforms quickly was illogical, because there was no political price to pay. While such actions might lose him a few hundred extreme 'Orange' votes, there would be thousands of Catholics who would transfer their vote to him;
- (e) it was now his personal belief that there would be changes made in Northern Ireland in the future,

although he could not say whether they would come while Captain O'Neill was still Prime Minister.

Lord Stonham then referred to Mr. McAteer's recent speech in which he urged Members of the Nationalist Party to re-think their policies in circumstances in which he foresaw that there would be an end to questions of discrimination against the Catholic minority. Lord Stonham asked Mr. McAteer precisely what form of constitution he had in mind in his reported references to Belfast and Dublin and a little United Nations type of society.

Mr. McAteer said it was clear to him that if all forms of discrimination were removed, the attitude of the Unionist party would be to revert to the old attitudes of partition. He did not agree with this and had made these statements in the hope that they would be an incentive for Captain O'Neill to seize on to introduce reforms. He could see great virtue in a softening of attitudes by both Parties at the same time. His speech, although criticised by the hard line Republicans, had been generally welcomed by the members of his Party.

In elaborating on his statement that "because of the facts of geography.....the fate of England is bound

irretrievably with the fate of Ireland", Mr. McAteer considered that if he recognised the constitutional sovereignty of Northern Ireland in partnership with Great Britain, as it was at the moment, then it was logical that following from this partnership, there must be some form of union. If the present causes of discrimination are abolished it will allow Protestants and Catholics to work side by side towards a political union. He did not see any virtue in, nor did he desire, a unified Ireland.

Mr. McAteer then drew Lord Stonham's attention to statements he had made in the Northern Ireland Parliament on 7th May 1968, in which he forecast the disturbances which have since taken place and Mr. Craig's reaction to them. He did this, he said, because he had pointed out time and time again to Mr. Craig what would happen as a result of his actions, and re-iterated his warning that there would be disturbances in Londonderry on 16th November unless the present ban was lifted. He considered that if the Civil Rights marchers were allowed to walk with no hindrance there would be no further disturbances, indeed the movement might well "fizzle-out" within a few weeks.

Mr. McAteer also said that he had had conversations with the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church (Dr. Withers)

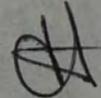
who, as a result of the discussion, had gone a long way in trying to take the heat out of the situation. He mentioned this because he wanted to make clear to all concerned that he had, himself, in addition to Captain O'Neill, made a great effort to ease the difficult situation in Northern Ireland.

Mr. McAteer raised two final points. The first, that before the summonses were issued following the recent disturbances in Londonderry, he had contacted Mr. Black (Government Secretary) warning him that such action would lead to serious trouble. Mr. Black had promised to pass the information on to Captain O'Neill, but apparently no action had been taken.

The second point, which Mr. McAteer made in the hope that it would be helpful, was that with the change in the Governorship of Northern Ireland, it was an admirable opportunity for an amnesty to be made by the Prime Minister. For example the summonses could be cancelled or various social or electoral reforms introduced.

Mr. McAteer ended by thanking Lord Stanham for receiving him and for undertaking to pass on his views to the Home Secretary and Prime Minister.

A joint press statement was agreed.



17.11.68