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NOTE of a Meeting held at  
10 Downing Street, S.W.1.,  
on WEDNESDAY, 21st MAY 1969 at 3.00 p.m.

PRESENT:

The Rt. Hon. Harold Wilson, MP  
Prime Minister

The Rt. Hon. James Callaghan, MP    Major ~~The~~ Rt. Hon. James Chichester-Clark,  
Secretary of State for the            Prime Minister of Northern Ireland  
Home Department

Lord Stonham,  
Minister of State,  
Home Office

The Rt. Hon. John Andrews,  
Deputy Prime Minister and Leader  
of the Senate

Sir Philip Allen,  
Permanent Under-Secretary of  
State, Home Office

The Rt. Hon. Brian Faulkner, MP  
Minister of Development

Sir Burke Trend,  
Secretary to the Cabinet

The Rt. Hon. Robert Porter, MP  
Minister of Home Affairs

Mr. H. Black,  
Secretary to the Cabinet of  
Northern Ireland

Mr. K.P. Bloomfield,  
Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet of  
Northern Ireland

SECRETARIAT:

Miss J.J. Nunn  
Mr. D.H.J. Hilary

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THE PRIME MINISTER, after welcoming Major Chichester-Clark and his colleagues, asked them to give him the Northern Ireland Government's assessment of the present situation in that country.

### Public Security

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that the political temperature in Northern Ireland was undoubtedly lower than it had been, partly as a result of the amnesty which he had announced shortly after taking office. Beneath the surface, however, there was still considerable tension, as the small scale riots in Belfast during the previous week had demonstrated. These had started as public house brawls but had assumed a political complexion when the police intervened. The security situation was still somewhat unsatisfactory. The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) had been unable to obtain any clear indication of the identity of those responsible for the sabotage of water and electricity installations on 19th-20th May. Such pointers as there were seemed to suggest a splinter group of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) but it was impossible to say whether infiltration of the IRA by communist influence had played any part.

In reply to the question when his Government thought that it would be possible for the Army to relinquish the task of guarding vulnerable points, MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that it was at present impossible to say. The Chief of the General Staff had recently suggested to him the recruitment of a force akin to the Army Department Constabulary to take over these duties from the Army, but the lack of success which the Northern Ireland Government had so far had in recruiting retired members of the RUC to reinforce the regular police, suggested that an alternative to the Army could not easily be found. He and his colleagues appreciated, however, the anxiety of the United Kingdom Government to withdraw the troops from these duties.

THE PRIME MINISTER and THE HOME SECRETARY emphasised that as the Home Secretary had already told Major Chichester-Clark when the latter took office, if the Northern Ireland Government were to call on the assistance of the troops to maintain law and order in the face of public disturbances, very difficult political and Parliamentary problems would arise at Westminster.

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They believed that such a situation would also create considerable difficulty for the Northern Ireland Government. This was one of the reasons why they were particularly interested in the scheme to recruit retired RUC officers to support the regular force and in the more fundamental problem of increasing the proportion of regular police officers drawn from the Roman Catholic community. Major Chichester-Clark said that his Government were anxious to augment the number of policemen available to the civil authorities because, at its present strength, the RUC could not accumulate a force of more than 600 at a place where disturbances threatened and the numbers available if there were disorder at several centres would of course be much smaller. They were also anxious to increase the proportion of Roman Catholics in the RUC. They had not been able to recruit even the one-third of the establishment available to Roman Catholics, not because any discriminatory test was imposed, but because Roman Catholic recruits were not forthcoming in adequate numbers. The proportion was at present about 10 per cent despite constant recruiting efforts, including talks by officers of the RUC in Roman Catholic schools, and the fact that some Roman Catholics had risen to senior positions in the RUC and were well known. He doubted whether the Roman Catholic hierarchy in the province could usefully be asked to bring their influence to bear on this point because it touched on the constitutional position of Northern Ireland. MR. PORTER said that he was considering a further effort to recruit Roman Catholics and had made it clear to the Opposition members of the Stormont Parliament that their support in this matter would be welcome.

#### Local Government Franchise

THE PRIME MINISTER said that he had noted with satisfaction the progress that had been made in dealing with the five points which had been the subject of his discussions with Captain Terence O'Neill on 4th November 1968. He was still concerned, however, about the problem of the local government franchise. MR. FAULKNER said that they had now committed themselves to a timetable which Mr. Porter had announced on the previous day, looking forward to the implementation of local government reorganisation and the reform of the local government franchise by the autumn of 1971. This would require a considerable administrative and

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political effort, but they thought that the timetable could be achieved and the indications were that all Parties in Northern Ireland would be content with it. They intended to publish a White Paper in the autumn of 1969 as a document for discussion. The White Paper would contain maps showing the outlines of the 16 or 17 new authorities which would replace the 70 or so now existing. It would also describe the functions of the new authorities and the proposed method of financing them.

They also proposed to introduce a short Bill to set up a representative commission to delineate the district or ward boundaries within the new authorities. The commission would be an independent body so that no charge of gerrymandering could be levelled at the Government.

The Local Government Bill would be introduced early in 1970 to implement their proposals for local government reform and to introduce the new local government franchise. The new register would be prepared and published in February 1971 and local government elections for the new authorities and on the new franchise would take place in the autumn of 1971. Legislation would be introduced to postpone until then the local government elections due to be held in 1970. There would thus be no more local government elections on the basis of the existing boundaries and the existing local government franchise.

In the meantime, a Bill to remove the limitation of the local government franchise to ratepayers and to implement the undertaking that the local government franchise would in future rest on the principle of "one man one vote" had already been promised. It would be introduced as soon as possible and was confidently expected to reach the statute book at the latest in the course of the present Session, which ended in December 1969, but possibly before the Summer Recess.

The Northern Ireland Government had pledged themselves publicly to publish the White Paper in the autumn and had said that they would produce a system of local authority boundaries which would be seen to be fair and impartial, but had not yet announced the intention to appoint a commission for the purpose. Major Chichester-Clark had also announced in the previous week that they proposed to appoint an equivalent to the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to deal with complaints against local government authorities.

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MR. PORTER said that the Bill to establish a Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration to deal with complaints against the central Government had received its Second Reading in the Senate on the previous day and was expected to receive Royal Assent before the Summer Recess.

MR. ANDREWS said that credit should be given to Captain O'Neill and Major Chichester-Clark for the progress that had been made in putting forward and implementing proposals for reform. It had been a difficult journey to reach the position in which they now stood and there were still problems to be faced. The Unionist Party understood the obligations which rested upon them, but a little time and much understanding were still required before the Government could bring their reforms to fruition.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that it would be important to keep up the momentum of reform and it would help him if Major Chichester-Clark could make announcements from time to time on the progress of the various measures in his Government's programme so that he himself could reply to Questions in Parliament by reference to statements already made at Stormont.

#### Housing and Economic Development

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that the shortage of housing and jobs in Northern Ireland was the fundamental cause of discontent. Industrial consultants had advised that little improvement in employment could be expected in the years up to 1975 unless further inducements could be offered to industrialists to set up enterprises in Northern Ireland, and unless more money could be spent on infra-structure and on such matters as industrial training. On housing, 12,000 new dwellings a year were being built, which represented quite a large improvement, and the next target figure should be about 17,000 a year. The building industry could cope with this target, but more finance would be necessary. He realised that this was not an opportune time to ask for more money, and he accepted that the Northern Ireland Government must try to reduce their own public expenditure for other purposes, but almost any cut would be damaging and would result in further unemployment. The Northern Ireland Government could not provide anything like the money required from their own resources.

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THE PRIME MINISTER said that he could hold out no encouragement on this score. The United Kingdom Government had conducted a most rigorous and painful examination of all its own public spending programmes. In the current financial year public expenditure would be only 1 per cent above that in the previous year in real terms. After account was taken of such factors as the increase in the number of school children this represented a real cut. Northern Ireland expenditure, on the other hand, had gone up. The current sensitivity of Parliament on Northern Ireland questions was such that there would be considerable opposition if United Kingdom expenditure were reduced further in order to increase assistance to Northern Ireland.

MR. FAULKNER said that the Northern Ireland Government had decided to recommend to local authorities a "group plus points" scheme for housing allocation. After consultation with the local authorities a model scheme, based on the Scottish counterpart, was being prepared and would be circulated shortly to all local authorities, who would be asked for their observations and an indication of their plans by the end of July. It was not practicable to insist on all local authorities using an identical scheme, since conditions varied, for example as between rural and urban areas. But the Northern Ireland Government had said that all local authorities must publish a scheme which would be subject to the approval of the Northern Ireland Government and which must be fair and be seen to be fair. Northern Ireland officials would discuss this matter with officials of the Ministry of Housing and Local Government, and he hoped to meet the Minister himself later. THE PRIME MINISTER said that it might be helpful if the Secretary of State for Scotland were associated with these discussions.

MR. FAULKNER added that real progress had been made in the Londonderry area where a Development Commission had been appointed with all municipal powers. The population of the area was 60,000 and it was estimated that 10,000 new houses were needed by 1931. The number of houses already completed or under construction was 3,000. There should be no trouble about finding sites. Nevertheless, Northern Ireland was far behind Great Britain in housing. The total housing stock was 430,000. About half had been built before 1919 and 100,000 were unfit. THE HOME SECRETARY said that similar and perhaps worse problems existed in Great Britain. It would be useful to have comparable figures of the number of houses lacking basic amenities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

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On industry, THE PRIME MINISTER said that the inducements offered to attract firms to Northern Ireland were in some ways more attractive than those in development areas in Great Britain. He asked how far the current political troubles were proving a disincentive. MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK replied that there was evidence that some firms which in normal circumstances would have decided to set up in Northern Ireland had not in fact done so. The Ministry of Commerce had no negotiations in train with any really large concerns. Some firms said that it was now difficult to persuade key workers to move to Northern Ireland, and some firms which were already in Northern Ireland were finding difficulty in obtaining orders. Tourism bookings were also down. MR. ANDREWS said that in spite of all that had been done, and the 70,000 new jobs that had been created since the war it could not be expected that Northern Ireland would be a stable community while unemployment persisted at its present level; fuller employment would relieve the friction. THE PRIME MINISTER pointed out that the friction militated against fuller employment.

#### The Civil Rights Movement

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that a delegate meeting of the Civil Rights Association had been held at Enniskillen on 18th May. The Meeting had issued an "ultimatum" to the Northern Ireland Government to the effect that if they did not announce a timetable of reforms within six weeks the movement would "continue with stages of the civil disobedience campaign". He was advised that the ultimatum need not be taken very seriously. The more extreme members of the movement had wanted to organise massive demonstrations all over Northern Ireland to coincide with his meeting with the Prime Minister; the more moderate element had opposed this suggestion and had agreed to the ultimatum as the price of not proceeding with the demonstrations. Particular reforms which the Association demanded were the abandonment of the Public Order Bill; "one man, one vote"; votes at 18 in Parliamentary and local elections; a compulsory points system for the allocation of local authority housing; machinery for investigating grievances against local authorities; legislation to prevent discrimination in employment; and a boundaries commission. Other points were the withdrawal of the special powers legislation and

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the disbandment of the Special Constabulary. The Northern Ireland Cabinet had decided in principle that there should be votes at 18 and the first moves had been made to secure acceptance of this principle by the Parliamentary Unionist Party. It would, however, be some time before it was implemented. The main source of resentment was the local government franchise. The demands for machinery for investigating grievances against local authorities and for legislation to prevent discrimination in employment would be met partly by the establishment of a Parliamentary Commissioner and partly by the complementary machinery which the Northern Ireland Government proposed to set up to consider citizens' grievances against public bodies or authorities outside the field of central government. The Northern Ireland Government were thinking in terms of machinery akin to that for race relations conciliation. Legislation in the present Session had been promised. MR. PORTER said that there was pressure for the publication of the report on the allegations of police brutality during the civil rights disturbances in Londonderry in January. This was, however, a police disciplinary report and as such was not intended for publication, although a copy would be sent to the Cameron Commission. The Inspector-General of the Royal Ulster Constabulary had said that the question of disciplinary proceedings was still open.

THE HOME SECRETARY said that the various reforms which the Northern Ireland Government were introducing would be a very telling answer to the demands of the civil rights movement. It was important to keep up the momentum of reform.

#### Special Powers Acts

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that he realised the difficulties caused by the fact that certain of the powers available under the Special Powers Acts were in conflict with the European Convention on Human Rights, and by the derogation which the United Kingdom Government were obliged to enter in respect of those powers. On 10th April the Northern Ireland Cabinet had decided to repeal many of the orders made under these Acts, leaving only about eight in force. Two nights later the attacks with explosives on public utilities had taken place and the Cabinet had felt that they could not proceed with repeal of the orders. He was, however, very conscious of the views of the United Kingdom Government and would take action as soon as possible.

**SECRET**Defence Closures in Northern Ireland

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK then referred to the intended closures of the Joint Anti-Submarine School at Londonderry and the Royal Air Force Station at Ballykelly. These would result in the loss of some 700 jobs. He realised that he could not expect the United Kingdom Government to rescind the closures but no Government establishment had come to Northern Ireland since 1956 and it would be valuable if consideration could be given to some such establishment being set up in Northern Ireland.

THE PRIME MINISTER said that very few new establishments were being generated and the scope for decentralisation of existing establishments was very limited. He could hold out no hope of any new establishment on the defence side.

Short Brothers and Harlands

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that the firm of Short Brothers and Harland was going through a very difficult period. The firm employed just over 6,000 people. MR. FAULKNER said that about half the workers were employed on the Skyvan project, which had secured only a trickle of sales. Negotiations with the Rohr Corporation were virtually at an end. The podding contract with Rolls Royce was going ahead and peak employment on it would be reached in 1972, but it would even then provide only about 400 jobs. A financial restructuring of the company was urgently needed.

Visit of the Taoiseach to London

MAJOR CHICHESTER-CLARK said that he understood that a meeting would be held in London between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, Mr. Lynch. It would be presentationally helpful to the Northern Ireland Government if this meeting did not take place immediately after his own meeting with the Prime Minister. THE PRIME MINISTER replied that his engagements precluded a meeting with Mr. Lynch in the imminent future.

**SECRET**Statements to the Press and Parliament

It was agreed that a brief statement should be issued to the Press immediately after the meeting. The Prime Minister would make a statement to Parliament the following day and Major Chichester-Clark would make a statement on similar lines to the Northern Ireland Parliament. The Prime Minister and Major Chichester-Clark discussed the outline of these statements and agreed that officials should prepare drafts after the meeting.

The Meeting ended at 4.30 p.m.

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

30th May 1969