

C O N F I D E N T I A LNORTHERN IRELAND

The Home Secretary saw Mr. Harold Black this morning. Mr. Cairncross and Mr. North were present.

The Home Secretary thanked Mr. Black for his help and co-operation in keeping the Home Office informed about developments in Northern Ireland. The Home Secretary outlined the Government's current policy towards Northern Ireland, mentioning that the aim was to get Northern Ireland to solve its own problems, and saying that H.M. Government would not want to push the new Prime Minister into measures which would cause great offence to either side in the present dispute; but, at the same time, public opinion in Great Britain had to be taken into account by H.M. Government.

in confidence

Mr. Black made the following points/about the present situation:-

- (a) Personalities as well as policies had led to Captain O'Neill's downfall - but chiefly policies.
- (b) The present likelihood was that Major Chichester-Clark and not Mr. Faulkner would be the next Prime Minister. Major Chichester-Clark was not a strong personality, and Mr. Faulkner and external events might in time sap his strength as Prime Minister.
- (c) It could be expected that the new Prime Minister would have formed his Cabinet by the weekend. He will then face a vote of confidence in the Northern Ireland House of Commons in a debate next Tuesday which might extend into Wednesday.
- (d) Miss Devlin and the English press were painting rather an alarmist picture of the risk of grave disorders in Northern Ireland. The tinder for real trouble was undoubtedly there, but both sides had recognised the dangers and had to some extent begun to draw back already.
- (e) He thought that H.M. Government should wait and see what emerged from the new Government before considering new initiatives. There was little doubt that they would not go back significantly on Captain O'Neill's policies of reform, including his commitment to "one man one vote" in the next local government elections.

The Home Secretary said that he would want to speak on the telephone to the new Prime Minister shortly after his appointment. His message would

/be

C O N F I D E N T I A L

be that he wanted to help him, but that the new Prime Minister should not start under mistaken assumptions about the Home Secretary's position. In particular, the Home Secretary would want to mention that the present understanding about the use of troops should continue and that the new Prime Minister should not expect to rely on troops to support policies which outraged substantial sections of Northern Ireland opinion.

The Home Secretary mentioned that if the situation ever became so grave that it could not be left to the Northern Ireland Government to handle, intervention from Westminster would inevitably bring in its train a whole set of new dangers and problems, and the view would be expressed that H.M. Government might alternatively disengage itself completely and deny Northern Ireland the support of troops to maintain order.

The Home Secretary suggested that one of the major problems was the lack of confidence between the police and the Roman Catholic community. Only those in authority could take real initiatives to remedy this, and one way might be to launch a recruiting drive for Roman Catholic policemen. This would help not only in Northern Ireland, but also in this country. Mr. Black agreed that this lack of confidence was a problem: the last civil rights deputation to Captain O'Neill had mentioned it as more important than "one man one vote". In the past the Roman Catholics had boycotted the public services, including the police, and there were virtually no Roman Catholics with sufficient experience to fill the senior ranks; he would bear in mind the Home Secretary's suggestion.

The Home Secretary acknowledged that the situation would be eased if the Roman Catholic community were to subscribe genuinely to the Northern Ireland constitution. The necessary lead might be given by the Roman Catholic hierarchy, and he would consider speaking to Cardinal Heenan to see if he could influence his colleagues in Northern Ireland.

Mr. Black agreed that unilateral legislation by Westminster in favour of one man one vote would probably be considered to be an excessive intrusion into Northern Ireland affairs. He also agreed that the withdrawal of financial aid was unlikely to produce acceptable results.

As an alternative measure, the Home Secretary mentioned his ideas for a round table conference.

BCC

30th April, 1969

Copied to: Mr. Hopper
Mr. Fries
Mr. Cairncross
Mr. North