

CONFIDENTIAL

copy to Mr Cameron
Mr Hopkins

Mr. Layton

Dunn

3/Dec.

32.

MINISTER OF DEFENCE FOR ADMINISTRATION

MIN(A)RH 211

Home Secretary

You will appreciate that we are under considerable pressure on a number of points which are bound to be raised during the Committee stage of the Ulster Defence Regiment Bill tomorrow. We are able to accept no amendments if we are to be sure of preserving the time-table which enables the Bill to become law sufficiently early for the Regiment to be set up according to our schedule. Even more difficult is our inability to promise the acceptance of the spirit of amendments if not the amendments themselves. You will appreciate that the bargain we struck with Stormont and the detailed approval of that bargain by the Cabinet gives us virtually no room for manoeuvre.

2. There are however a couple of issues on which we could give reassurance and on one of those I believe it would be particularly appropriate for us to do so. There is growing concern both in Northern Ireland and in the House about the likelihood of Catholics joining the new Regiment. This is not a matter of them being free to do so or of our procedures ensuring that they are offered a genuine welcome. The problem arises as a result of the fear that since the new force will be dominated by B Specials in the first instance there is really no point in a token number of Catholics joining it and giving it an air of multi-religious respectability.

3. We very much therefore want to be able to say that we are taking positive steps to encourage leaders of the minority groups in Northern Ireland to co-operate with us in our initial recruiting drive for the Ulster Defence Regiment. A general statement of that sort will satisfy no one. We need to specify positive steps that we propose to take. I am anxious therefore either to say that a number of specified leaders of the Northern Ireland community have been invited to a meeting to discuss recruitment to the force or that I am going to Northern Ireland with the express intention of discussing recruitment with leaders of the minority community.

4. You will appreciate that I was urged to do this at the end of my statement in the House by Quintin Hogg and others and I gave a qualified acceptance to their proposals. I have of course seen the minutes of your meeting with Major Chichester-Clark last week, but notwithstanding that I feel that we must make a gesture of

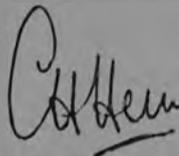
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this sort and I also feel strongly that such a gesture would have very little force if it was organised under the chairmanship of the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland.

5. My present intention is to say something along these lines late tomorrow evening during the Committee stage of the Bill. Your comments would of course be very much appreciated.

I am copying this minute to the Secretary of State for Defence.



Roy Hattersley

(Dictated by Mr. Hattersley)

24 November 1969.

