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AN RÚNAÍOCHT ANGLA-ÉIREANNACH

BÉAL FEIRSTE

ANGLO-IRISH SECRETARIAT

BELFAST

Mr M C O'Flynn
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9 March 1987

cc: Secretary
Mr O Tuathail
Section
Mr Nally
Mr Wood
Mr Matthews

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Mr. Declan O'Donovan
Counsellor
Anglo-Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Declan

I am attaching an internal Northern Ireland Police Federation report on recent meetings with the Secretary of State and Nicholas Scott. This was given to us by the British side on a strictly confidential and informal basis with the comment that it might assist in understanding the current preoccupations and perspective of RUC members generally.

Yours sincerely .

Colm O Floinn

1. MEETING WITH THE SECRETARY OF STATE

(i) Last month representatives of the Central Committee of the Police Federation for Northern Ireland, led by the Chairman - Mr Alan Wright - met Mr Nicholas Scott M.P, Minister of State, with responsibility for law and order in Northern Ireland. There has since been a further meeting (4th February 1987) - this time with the Secretary of State, Mr Tom King M.P and with Mr Scott.

The Committee representatives were accompanied on the meeting to the Secretary of State by Sir Eldon Griffiths M.P, our Parliamentary Adviser.

The main purpose of the meetings, which were requested by the Federation and readily agreed to by the Northern Ireland Office, was the need to ensure that the N.I.O at the highest possible level was fully cognisant of the current concerns of the Federated members. Listed below is the range of subjects and the gist of the Federation's representations to Ministers.

(ii) AFFECT OF CURRENT POLITICAL DEADLOCK ON FEDERATED MEMBERS

Concern was conveyed to the Ministers that the current political situation in the Province continued to put pressure on police officers as individuals and in many cases had led to personal difficulties for the families of police officers. The Federation expressed the view that a significant majority of the population had been politically alienated or become disillusioned. As a result, the police as the Government representatives of law and order had found themselves in many areas isolated without community support, and not only suffer as police officers but also suffer as members of the community in our private lives.

The Federation stated that the pattern of terrorist violence had changed over the years. The number of incidents may have declined, but the quality of terrorist operation had improved so that in recent years police deaths had grown significantly. The Force was bearing the brunt of the violence and that out of our 10,500 members we can expect to lose about 10-15 officers a year through terrorism. This is of grave concern and from the Government's point of view the continued violence must devalue a major purpose of the Anglo-Irish Agreement, an improvement in security particularly along the

Following the Marching Season last year 600 officers and families were intimidated in one way or another, an experience which the Federation was extremely anxious not to see repeated. The meeting also discussed the need to ensure that the Force was not subject to political direction and that there should be significant advances in border security and in overall security.

Inevitably we cannot go into detail and members requiring more information on these sensitive matters should speak to their representatives.

(iii) PROPOSED CHANGES IN R.U.C COMPLAINTS & DISCIPLINE PROCEDURES

The Northern Ireland Office Ministers were briefed by Sir Eldon on our four main objections to the proposed legislation. These are:-

X (a) Political and Religious Discrimination - The Order will introduce a new discipline offence of discrimination on grounds of religious belief or political opinion. The Federation considers this is unnecessary since it already is quite explicitly covered in the R.U.C Code Regulations.

(b) Interference in the Private Lives of Police Officers - Police Authority members are to be given powers to refer to the new Commission any matter where they think the private or public conduct of Police Officers may be improper. This is both unnecessary and much too wide.

(c) Third Party Complaints without Written Consent - The introduction of the third party complaint system is probably the ultimate in mischievous busy-bodging. Our members already are subject to an elaborate mechanism for dealing with complaints from members of the public.

(d) Equal Status with England and Wales - We asked for the Federation to be identified separately in legislation rather than lumped in with the "Police Association". We are seeking the same rights and responsibilities of the Police Federations of England, Wales and Scotland.

(iv) SAMPSON INQUIRY

X The Federation representatives pressed the Secretary of State to ensure that there would be a speedy resolution of the findings of the Sampson Inquiry so that any remedial action required, if any, could be quickly implemented.

(v) FLAGS AND EMBLEMS ACT

We expressed concern that whether or not the Flags and Emblems Act was obsolete, its repeal may well afford an opportunity for provocation and could give rise to confrontation.

RENT ALLOWANCE

There has been no further movement since the M.S.X Message was issued. The Federation is maintaining its stance that the allowance is not re-negotiable, must be paid and must be back dated to 1st April 1986.

An M.S.X Message will be issued immediately on receipt of any positive information from the Police Authority.