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CONCLUSIONS OF A MEETING OF THE CABINET HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE ON MONDAY, 14TH OCTOBER, 1968, AT 10.00 A.M.

PRESENT:- The Prime Minister
The Minister of Commerce
The Minister of Finance
The Minister of Home Affairs
The Minister of Health and Social Services
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Agriculture
The Minister of Development
The Minister in the Senate

ALSO PRESENT:- The Attorney-General
The Chief Whip
The Secretary to the Cabinet
The Deputy Secretary to the Cabinet
The Private Secretary to the Prime Minister

1. CHIEF WHIP'S APPEARANCE ON DAVID FROST'S TELEVISION PROGRAMME

The Prime Minister congratulated the Chief Whip on his excellent performance in Friday's programme on the Londonderry situation.

2. DEBATE IN PARLIAMENT ON LONDONDERRY DISTURBANCES

The Chief Whip mentioned the possibility that the Nationalists would try to anticipate Wednesday's debate on a Government Motion by raising the subject during the adjournment debate on Tuesday, the time for this being perhaps artificially lengthened by a decision to drop Mr. O'Reilly's Motion on social welfare. After discussion, it was agreed to hold a Party Meeting (with Senators as well as M.P.s attending) at 11.30 a.m. on Tuesday, 15th October, to discuss the tactics and content of the debate; it was also decided to have a Private Notice Question put down by a Unionist backbencher for Tuesday so that the opposition could be pre-empted on the initiation of a debate on the adjournment.

3. POLITICAL ASPECTS OF RECENT EVENTS

Ministers had an opportunity of reading before the start of the meeting a Memorandum by the Prime Minister on the need for consideration of the criticisms of Government policy which had been voiced on television and in the Press over the past week. In the course of a wide-ranging discussion it was suggested

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That while it would be wholly wrong to make concessions under the threat of disorder the multiple vote in local government should not be regarded as sacrosanct. The Government's wish to reach an accommodation with the Mater Hospital had been mentioned in several Queen's Speech debates recently and although the delay in obtaining agreement might be criticised it would be at least a partial answer to indicate that the negotiations, which were still continuing, had become somewhat protracted because of the inherently complicated nature of the problem.

The possibility of a crash housing programme for Londonderry was canvassed on the ground that this seemed to be a major grievance - a point taken by Cardinal Conway when he stressed over the week-end the social aspect of the Londonderry problem, apparently regarding housing in this context as more pressing than employment or the franchise. Several Ministers strongly deprecated the apparent impunity with which extremist Protestant elements seemed to arrange parades and meetings for obstructive purposes.

Northern Ireland's financial dependence on the United Kingdom Exchequer was analysed by the Minister of Finance, who explained the difficulties that were already arising in negotiations with the Treasury through decisions having to be referred to Ministers when formerly they would have been taken by officials; in this situation it was most unfortunate that Northern Ireland's political problems should be spot-lighted by a hostile press.

It was agreed that the Minister in the Senate should be provided by the respective Ministers with information on the allocation of jobs and houses and on the franchise position.

The discussion was adjourned.

4. CLAIMS FOR MALICIOUS DAMAGE AND PERSONAL INJURY ARISING FROM THE
"CIVIL RIGHTS" DEMONSTRATION IN LONDONDERRY CITY

The recommendations contained in the memorandum, dated 10th October, 1968, by the Minister of Home Affairs were approved.

Thomas O'Neill