

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE PRIME MINISTER, THE MINISTERS OF FINANCE, COMMERCE AND DEVELOPMENT AND MEMBERS OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE OF THE IRISH CONGRESS OF TRADE UNIONS HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE ON MONDAY, 8TH SEPTEMBER, 1969.

Present:

The Prime Minister
The Minister of Finance
The Minister of Education
The Minister of Commerce
The Minister of Development

Mr. D. C. B. Holden
Mr. T. E. Kennedy
Mr. D. Gilliland

Mr. R. Allen, J.P. (Amalgamated Society of Woodworkers), (Chairman, N.I. Committee of I.C.T.U.)
Mr. A. Barr (National Union of Sheetmetal Workers)
Mr. J. H. Binks (Clerical and Administrative Workers Union)
Mr. B. G. Harkin (N.I. Civil Service Association)
Mr. C. D. Hull, J.P. (Amalgamated Union of Engineering and Foundry Workers)
Mr. S. McGonagle (Irish Transport and General Workers Union)
Mr. W. Patterson (National Union of Tailor and Garment Workers)
Mr. C. Vance, M.B.E. (Amalgamated Transport and General Workers Union)
Mr. D. Wylie, J.P. (Union of Shop Distributive and Allied Workers)
Mr. W. J. Blease (Northern Ireland Officer I.C.T.U.)

1. THE PRIME MINISTER welcomed the members of the Committee and thanked them for the document which had been sent to him by Mr. Blease. He thanked them also for their help in keeping tempers cool over the past weeks.
2. MR. ALLEN thanked the Prime Minister for agreeing to receive the deputation and said that the events on the streets over the weekend had overshadowed the points raised in the paper. They would like to have a brief discussion on these points but their primary aim was to discuss how best the members of the Committee could help in restoring order and keeping the peace. Trade Union members at all levels down to shop stewards had been successful so far in their work of helping to maintain discipline and order but mob violence and intimidation were leading to a reign of terror. Most people wanted peace but they were not being allowed to have it. A week had gone by already since the Home Secretary's visit and he urged the Government to introduce the promised reforms as quickly as possible.

/3. THE PRIME MINISTER

3. THE PRIME MINISTER agreed with Mr. Allen that the first priority was to take the heat out of the present situation and that the points raised in the paper should be dealt with very briefly. They would then discuss how best the Trade Unions could help in maintaining peace and keeping order.

THE POSITION OF NORTHERN IRELAND

4. MR. BLEASE said that Northern Ireland's constitutional status as an integral part of the United Kingdom was fully accepted by the members of the Committee.

CIVIL PEACE

5. MR. BLEASE said that the Committee had the greatest respect for the Police who had been placed in a very difficult position by having to perform security duties outside normal police duties. He thought there should be a volunteer element in the police to look after security. The police should have some form of trade union; some steps in this direction had already been taken and these should be continued. THE PRIME MINISTER said that it was generally known that the future of the R.U.C. and the Special Constabulary was under review by the Hunt Committee and no one could say until this Committee had reported, what form its recommendations would take. He was sure that the Committee would look into the question of Trade Unions in the police force and no doubt it would receive a memorandum on the subject from the I.C.T.U. Committee.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

6. MR. BLEASE said that the Committee welcomed the proposal to set up a Community Relations Board but he, Mr. Allen and Mr. McGonagle warned against appointing Roman Catholic and Protestant members of the Board in any specified proportions, as this would only continue the division of communities. People should be appointed to the Board only on the basis of merit.

APPOINTMENTS IN PUBLIC SERVICE

7. THE COMMITTEE thought that a Public Appointments Board should be set up for the recruitment and appointment of staff in local authorities and other public bodies. THE PRIME MINISTER said that this point would be taken up by the Working Parties which were being appointed.

HOUSING

8. THE COMMITTEE'S views were as set out in the document submitted, notably that the Housing Trust should be reconstructed and made the central organisation for the provision and allocation of public housing and that a target of 20,000 houses a year should be achieved as soon as possible.

/THE MINISTER OF

THE MINISTER OF DEVELOPMENT said that the Housing Trust build where necessary and various local planning difficulties which had arisen had now been resolved. All but two local authorities had accepted the model scheme on the allocation of houses issued by his department and by his direction all local authorities were using the scheme. No local authority allocation scheme would be operated without the approval of the Ministry of Development and no scheme would be published that was out of sympathy with the view of the Ministry. No housing programme had been held up on the grounds of insufficient finance.

EMPLOYMENT

9. MR. BLEASE said that the Committee had given its fullest support to the manpower and industrial training programme. He thought that the Economic Council might make a more forceful approach to the situation and should be reconstituted. THE MINISTER OF COMMERCE said that the Council was a most important consultative body on which employers' and trade unions representatives were fully integrated and it directly influenced Government thinking. There would be a Working Party to supplement the thinking of the planning consultants who were considering the 1970-75 plan. It was necessary to keep the confidence of industry and to work for the restoration of peace and quiet and the Government welcomed the co-operation of the trade unions in achieving this aim.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

10. The views of the Committee were as set out in the memorandum.

EDUCATION

11. It was recognised that the views set out in the memorandum were a long-term remedy. THE MINISTER OF EDUCATION said that the 1968 Education Act had brought about a certain measure of co-operation in management. He would like to see the Roman Catholic schools meeting Protestant schools on the playing fields.

SECURITY AND LIBERTY

12. The terms of the memorandum under this heading were referred to and the PRIME MINISTER said that it had been hoped last April to suspend the regulations made under the Special Powers Act but that immediately after that time there had been more trouble, and that it had been necessary to continue the regulations. MR. BINKS said that more was needed than suspension of regulations. The Act should be replaced by more appropriate legislation.

COMPOSITION OF THE SENATE, ETC.

13. MR. BLEASE said that as stated in the memorandum, full consideration should be given to the basis of representation in the Senate, on the Privy Council and on /public boards.

public boards. The Trade Unions could help through greater involvement with public bodies. He thought, too, that persons appointed to such bodies should not be "hand-picked"; instead approaches should be made to organisations to nominate representatives to serve on public bodies.

FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS

14. The views of the Committee were as set out in the memorandum. MR. BLEASE said that the Committee realised that some of the points raised in the paper were fairly long-term matters but he thought that the reforms promised should be pushed forward with the utmost urgency and that Parliament should be recalled even though legislation on reforms was not yet ready. THE PRIME MINISTER agreed on the need for urgency and said that although it had not yet been made public it was intended to recall Parliament at an earlier date than originally intended. The proposed reforms needed discussion and drafting but the Government intended to have these reforms, apart from those connected with local government, on the statute books by Christmas.

15. MR ALLEN said that he thought that the terms and tone of the document submitted were moderate. He wished to emphasise the last paragraph which mentioned the strenuous efforts of trade union officials, shop stewards and members to maintain calm, order and solidarity. As had been agreed at the beginning of the meeting the points raised in the document had been overtaken by events over the weekend and he would like to ask the Prime Minister and other Ministers what the Cabinet had in mind to deal with the situation which had arisen.

16. THE PRIME MINISTER said that a reply in writing would be made to some of the points raised in the memorandum. As regards the events of the weekend the first step was to make an appreciation of the many conflicting reports of the various events and the Cabinet was meeting that afternoon to consider the situation. It was essential to get the barricades down quickly and peacefully and to have adequate troops stand by to ensure complete security.

17. A very full discussion followed in which it was agreed that the essential needs were to restore confidence and free people from fear; to emphasise that the reforms and other measures announced would be pushed forward with the utmost despatch; to put this information over to the man in the street as emphatically as possible. Members of the Committee would put their point of view to Government and Opposition back benchers and would call a meeting of all unions to put forward their point of view. The Committee also recommended that the illegal radio stations should be jammed.

18. At the end of the discussion an agreed joint statement was issued the text of which is as follows:

The Prime Minister, Major J. D. Chichester-Clark, and the Ministers of Finance, Education, Commerce and Development, meeting jointly with Mr. R. Allen, Chairman, and the Executive Committee of the Northern Ireland Committee of the Irish Congress of Trade Unions at Stormont Castle today declared their unanimous determination to take whatever steps lay to their hands to promote confidence throughout the community.

In particular they emphasised that both Government and trades union organisations considered it absolutely vital that the policies underlined in the United Kingdom-Northern Ireland Government Joint Declaration be carried through with the utmost despatch.

The Government re-affirmed their unequivocal commitment both to the letter and spirit of the reforms and other measures announced. These include:-

1. Parliamentary Commissioner
2. Commission to investigate complaints against local authorities and public bodies
3. Points scheme for allocation of local authority housing
4. Reform of local government boundaries
5. Reform of local government franchise
6. Community Relations Board
7. Release of Internees
8. Appointment of Minister for Community Relations
9. Amnesty for firearms
10. Mission from United Kingdom departments to assess the economic and industrial prospects
11. Joint Working Parties from United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Departments to study fair allocation of housing, the avoidance of discrimination in public employment, and the promotion of good community relations.

Inquiries set up include:-

1. The Cameron Commission;
2. The Hunt Inquiry into the organisation, recruitment structure and composition of the Police in Northern Ireland; and
3. The Scarman Tribunal.

Concerned about the provision of employment and the building of houses they jointly pledge themselves to give these matters urgent priority. In this respect they confidently assert to all concerned with investment in Northern Ireland that all operatives in factories are determined that nothing should interfere with the efficient production of our firms.

They regard as utterly reprehensible the activities of any individual or body calculated to incite violence or promote distrust and they urge confidence in the forces of law and order.

They urge everyone to keep off the streets unless it is essential in the pursuance of their lawful business and stress that gatherings of dissident groups should not be encouraged or supported.

They are unanimous in the view that the most valuable contribution that people can make at this time is to try to secure the removal of barricades by peaceful and voluntary means in conjunction with the security forces.

They make this declaration in solemn terms and commend its mutual appeal to every section of the community.