

CONFIDENTIAL

## MINORITY RECOGNITION AND REPRESENTATION

1. There are I think 2 major problems for the Government in determining its attitude and policy in regard to the minority. The first is the attitude of the minority itself and the second is of communicating with it.
  
2. As to attitude the first difficulty is that a sizeable number of people do not accept the validity of the State. How large the number is is uncertain but the important point is that the majority believe it to be large. This attitude is seen as provocative and threatening by even moderate Unionists. Unionist fears are in turn heightened by acts of violence against the State, by the facts of the population trends and by the often hostile and bitter attitude of the Republic. The second difficulty is that large numbers of Roman Catholics positively distrust Unionist Government and this applies not only to Central but, and perhaps even more forcibly, to local administration. While there can be no compromise with the first view the second in the light of Cameron and the Reform Programme for example is at least understandable. The trouble is that many Unionists tend to regard absence of of Government /allegiance and distrust/as synonymous and treat the minority accordingly. At best there is considerable mutual distrust.
  
3. In the circumstances it is becoming a matter of urgency for the Government to dispel this distrust by the minority and to show that their beliefs are mistaken. Macrory should help at local level but the transfer of functions to Stormont will in turn make it all the more important that central Government is trusted. Already the Government is suspected of beginning to drag its feet on Macrory.

This is not true but it illustrates this prevailing air of distrust. Any delay in implementing reforms gives the impression of unwillingness and gives credence to the belief, which is quickly propagated, of the Government not being sincere in its desire for reform. It is now clear that the minority will not believe in the Reform Programme until they can see and feel its effects. In this connection it is unfortunate that the 2 major reform measures which will directly affect the ordinary citizen - Central Housing and Macrory - should also be the items which take longest to introduce. At the same time the Government is coming to a point in the completion of the Reform Programme which probably gives it the best opportunity for a move towards securing a better understanding with the minority.

4. How does one convey the Government's efforts to the man-in-the-street, for obviously they are not reaching him at present? The difficulty here is that the minority are not a homogeneous group and it is impossible to find anyone who can confidently be said to speak for the minority. There is the Roman Catholic Church, there are the elected representatives and there are "non-political" laymen. It would seem that at least for the present the Government would need to open clearer channels of communication with all three. There are firm grounds, however, for believing that the Church is no longer regarded by many laymen as the authority to speak for Catholics on non-secular matters. Certainly the experience of the Ministry of Community Relations on the question of minority names for appointment to public boards and bodies has been that we have been strongly advised not to seek nominations by the Church. The Cardinal's position in these matters does not seem to be anything like as formidable as heretofore and it may be that this in turn raises doubts as to the dominance of his role in the determination of educational

questions and policy. All in all the circumstances seem to suggest a fresh examination of the Government's relationship with the elected representatives of the minority as to whether it provides the best channel of communication.

5. In the case of the minority elected representatives the question of mistrust is particularly obvious. Too often it is the negative aspect of Government - law and order - which is most apparent to them and with which they become more or less obsessed. So long as the Government keeps them at arm's length there seems little prospect of any change in this attitude and their behaviour in Parliament. Government representatives are in the main seen by Opposition Members as being drawn from a group or class with whom they have little or no affinity. The gap between "them" and "us" must be bridged in some way and if the present attitudes preclude this then some experimentation is necessary. At the moment Opposition Members do not participate sufficiently in Government either at electoral or nominated level. This is a major source of grievance and trouble. More participation would it is felt bring reassurance and in turn a more realistic attitude to the need for compromise. If this need for change could be accepted ways and means of giving effect to it could be worked out in detail. One obvious way is for Ministers to give Opposition Members an indication of their proposals in the legislative field. The setting up of House of Commons committees also provides an answer. Day to day contact on constituency matters might also be stepped up.

6. There is, however, little point in making advances to and with the minority if these only provoke a grass roots backlash among the majority. The Government's reform policy is founded very much on the premise that stability will come from conciliation not from repression.

but this view is not held across the board by the majority, many of whom believe Catholics to be unwilling to respond to conciliatory action. There is, therefore, a corresponding need for reciprocal concessions on the part of the minority and their representatives. The Movement cannot be all one-way and Catholic leaders must be made to realise they need to adopt a flexible policy through participation.

7. This in turn leads to the point that better communication is needed between Protestants and Catholics as well as between Government and the minority. The present tendency for people to live in districts according to their religious beliefs does not help. Neither does the related problem of segregated education. It will not be possible to make any sudden or dramatic change on these touchy fronts but the Government must show that basically it prefers integration to segregation wherever this is practicable. Where even limited initiative is possible in this respect it should be attempted and already for example there is some evidence of a tiny voice of support for integrated education where parents wish to have this for their children.

8. This paper was prepared with a view to listing general principles. If its philosophy is accepted detailed papers would be required on specific aspects.

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