

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND REPRESENTATIVES  
FROM THE SDLP ON 19 DECEMBER 1973

## PRESENT:-

Secretary of State

Mr Cooper  
Mr Allan  
Mr McNeill

SDLP:

Mr Fitt  
Mr Hume  
Mr Devlin  
Mr Duffy

The following points were discussed.

1. Detainees

The SDLP said that it was not clear from what the Secretary of State had said on television last night whether any releases would be made before Christmas. They felt that there had to be adequate movement of people out of detention and a formula to end detention, possibly with rehabilitation provisos, before they could sit on an Executive. The Provisional IRA had a vested interest in keeping detention going. To this end it was possible that up to 25% of those released may return to violence. However, the minority community would see that the Provisionals were nothing more than wreckers if detention ended and they continued with their campaign. The delegation asked if any of those who might be released would have to sign any declaration. They made the point that, although funds for the IRA were drying up in the USA, detention was the only issue that kept any money flowing. They said that Senator Kennedy and Mr O'Dwyer, the two most formidable personalities in Irish-American politics, were now completely in line with SDLP thinking though they still had reservations about detention. Mr Hume said that HMG should not fear a Protestant reaction since a senior member of the UVF had told him that they were not in a position to mount a violent campaign nor would the people in their areas support them. Some of the SDLP Assembly Members would like advance knowledge of releases so that they could get some of the credit.

The Secretary of State said that he was going ahead with releasing some detainees even though there was considerable feeling in the rest of the UK especially after yesterday's bombs in London. Mr Cooper pointed out that the end of detention could be in sight. If there was a positive response to the releases that would take place there could be further releases. The Secretary of State said that none of those released would be asked to sign any declaration.

In response to a question, Mr Cooper said he would look at the case for paying compensation to those released and to the possibility of wives of detainees being able to claim supplementary benefit grants to cover the cost of clothing for the detainees and travel to visit them in Maze Prison.

2. Rent and Rates Strike

The delegation thought that the Party should be able to make an announcement on the rent and rates strike about Friday or Saturday of this week. They were concerned about possible cases of hardship and that arrangements for re-paying arrears would be as flexible as possible. They wanted more detailed information on an area basis of the numbers on rent and rates strike. Mr Cooper said that more detailed information would be sought. He said that if the SDLP were to make a helpful statement at the weekend then HMG could respond by making helpful arrangements for the re-paying of arrears.



D G McNEILL  
Private Secretary  
20 December 1973

Copies to:-

Mr van Straubenzee  
Mr Howell  
Mr Mills  
Lord Belstead  
Mr Cooper  
Sir David Holden  
Mr Woodfield  
Sir Harold Black  
Mr Smith  
Mr Bloomfield  
Mr Howard-Drake  
Mr D Payne  
Mr D Howe  
Mr Trevelyan  
Mr J Allan  
Mr Jordan  
Mr Goddard  
Mr Marsh  
Mr D G Allen  
Mr J Lawrence  
Mr Williams  
Mr Roberts  
Mr Stevens (2)