

*Dr. Paisley*  
*Mr. Adams*  
*Tom & John*  
*10/11/75*  
**(7)**

NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MEMBERS OF THE OFFICIAL UNIONIST PARTY HELD AT STORMONT CASTLE AT 3.45 PM ON THURSDAY 9 JANUARY 1975

Present:

Secretary of State  
Sir Frank Cooper  
Mr Cudlipp  
Mr Jordan

Mr West  
Mr Laird  
Captain Ardill

This meeting was one of a series with the main political parties of Northern Ireland which had been called by the Secretary of State to discuss the political and security situation during the IRA ceasefire.

Response to Ceasefire

Referring to the stormy meeting with Dr Paisley earlier that week, the Secretary of State said that he hoped Mr West would take him at his word when he said categorically that he was not negotiating either directly or indirectly with the IRA. His only response to any of the approaches that had been made to him was to say that a genuine and sustained cessation of violence would create a new situation and new opportunities for progress. Despite Dr Paisley's incredulity, he stressed again that the 4 Church Leaders who saw the Prime Minister had brought with them no proposals. No negotiations were taking place and if that situation ever changed, he would say so publicly.

Referring to the Ulster Unionist Council's letter of 2 January 1975, the Secretary of State said that there was no question of the link with Great Britain being broken nor would there be an amnesty for convicted prisoners. Similarly, the Security Forces received his full support and indeed were under his direction.

Mr West asked whether the Security Forces were now restricted from arresting suspected terrorists. The Secretary of State replied that the Army and Police were there to carry out the law and suspects would be arrested and put through the courts in the normal way. Captain Ardill asked whether the Army's policy on the questioning of suspects had been altered following the ceasefire. The Secretary of State replied that if there was a cessation of violence, it was a natural consequence that the level of military activity would be reduced proportionately. He re-iterated that people would continue to be put through the courts.

Mr Laird referred to the pressure being built up by the media for a response by the Government to the ceasefire. He argued that the only possible response was an arms amnesty. The Secretary of State agreed that there were arguments in favour of this but stressed that the timing had to be finely judged. Any amnesty would have to show a good return and arms would need to be surrendered from both sides. Captain Ardill agreed that the timing was not yet right. It was also mutually accepted that violence would not end overnight and that there would always be an element on both sides who would continue to engage in armed crime. The troubles had created a generation inured to violence and vandalism.

Captain Ardill proposed that if the ceasefire continued the Army should be redeployed to the border areas in a determined effort to seal the border to terrorist activity. The Secretary of State said that this point had been taken very much on board.

Commenting on the SDLP's position, Captain Ardill mentioned that they were travelling to Dublin shortly to seek further instructions; they were feeling the draught. Mr Laird pointed out that the more response to the ceasefire, the weaker was not only the SDLP's position but also his. Anything that led people to believe that violence paid off increased the support for para-military organisations. Acknowledging the fact that the Secretary of State's initial response to the ceasefire over Christmas had been very limited, Mr Laird emphasised that there should be no amnesty for convicted prisoners. Loyalist prisoners were optimistic at the moment about an amnesty; if they received one, he would quit politics. The Secretary of State gave him an assurance that there would be no amnesty.

#### RUC Reserve

Turning to wider issues, Mr West criticised the slow recruitment to the RUC Reserve. The Secretary of State replied that recruitment was in fact promising; in the last 3 months, 1,282 people had been recruited into the Reserve. Much of the delay was caused by the careful but necessary vetting of applicants.

Mr West went on to say that many Reservists felt that they were not being properly employed in their full operational role. The Secretary of State said that the use of the Reserve on static guard duty freed fully trained RUC personnel for operational duties and increased the overall efficiency of the police.

Mr West also commented that the regular force was concerned that the increase in the Reserve would reduce their overtime and this had created friction. The Secretary of State promised to look into the problem and discuss with the Chief Constable - Action: Mr Cromey for a draft letter to the Chief Constable.

Constitutional Convention

The Secretary of State outlined the progress on the Convention. The date of the Elections had not yet been decided but would be some time in the Spring. Meanwhile preparatory organisation was being done by Mr Blackburn. The Third Discussion Paper would not long be delayed and at a suitable moment the name of the Chairman would be announced.

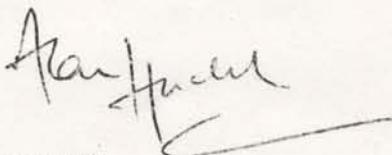
Mr West commented that meaningful discussions with Mr Blackburn could only begin after the Elections; before then no one knew who would be elected.

In response to a question from Mr Laird, the Secretary of State explained the status of a Member of the Convention. Members would be accorded the same courtesies as MPs or Assembly Members although they could only debate constitutional issues. Nevertheless Convention Members would have the opportunity of persuing local grievances with Ministers. Mr Laird commented that it would prove difficult to find candidates of the right calibre because of the low salary being offered.

Captain Ardill said that they were convinced that the Convention would arrive at an acceptable solution.

Finally Mr West said that he was particularly interested in Local Government re-organisation and in the passage which was supposedly deleted from the Kilbrandon Report before publication. The Secretary of State denied knowledge of this but said that the Convention would have to consider the issue of Local Government fully.

The meeting last one hour and, on both sides, was cordial and friendly throughout.



A E HUCKLE  
Private Secretary

10 January 1975