

1. CMO ✓ RFW 1975
2. Dr McKee

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



to see. No 11.5.79

cc PS/Mr Alison (B & L) (M)
PS/PUS (B & L) (M)
Mr Hannigan
Mr Barry
Dr Sloan ✓
Mr Jackson
Mr Hamilton

PS/S of S (B & L) (MUFAX)

KIERAN NUGENT - PROTESTOR AT MAZE

I refer to Mr Hannigan's minute of 9 May.

2. The consultations with the Governor of the Maze referred to in para 3 of that minute were completed last night.

3. The Governor had misgivings on two aspects.

4. First, as with all visits of this kind, he feared that prisoners might use the presence of newsmen and cameramen as an excuse for demonstrations which could cause problems of control in the prison. In discussion with the Governor we agreed "ground-rules" about what the newsmen would see and what they would not see - similar to the ground-rules used for previous visits. The Governor accepted that these arrangements would be a sufficient safeguard.

5. Second, and more important, the Governor felt strongly that the timing of this particular visit - in relation to the release of Nugent - would be regarded by PIRA as a provocative act on the part of the Prison Authorities; this might then lead to reprisals against the Prison Officers. The Governor summed up his objection under this heading as being that "we were politicising" the prison service.

6. There was lengthy discussion on this second point. We took the line that this particular press visit is part of the on-going process of "de-mystifying" the H Blocks at the Maze. The purpose of such visits is to let the outside world see that the Government has nothing to hide in what is going on at the Maze and this way we can hope to offset the propaganda of PIRA which is designed to convince people that there is a brutal prison regime of oppression at the Maze to which the prison officers are parties. We hope therefore that the prison officers would accept that, if the handling by the media team of the visit was, as we hoped/^{it}would be, helpful, the outcome of this visit would be to the benefit of prison officers - as indeed they had felt themselves that

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~



previous visits had been.

7. The Governor was sceptical. After lengthy discussion, however, he said that if it was the Government's view that the risks to which he had drawn attention should be accepted in order to try to obtain the benefits which we hoped to achieve, then he would co-operate fully.
8. Arrangements were accordingly made last night for the visit to go ahead today. The Minister of State was kept informed last night.
9. The media team are now (10 am) in the prison.
10. Nugent is clearly not going to co-operate in bathing, etc, and the Government has decided not to risk further efforts to persuade him to do so. This is as we expected and supports our present view that Nugent is unlikely to allow himself to be interviewed by the media team.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'J F IRVINE', written in a cursive style.

J F IRVINE
NIO (DUNDONALD HOUSE)

10 May 1979