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- 7 MAR 1984
N.I.O. BELFAST

HEAD OF THE N.I.
12 MAR 1984
CIVIL SERVICE

IN CONFIDENCE

POLICE AUTHORITY FOR NORTHERN IRELAND
POLICY CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING WITH MEMBERS OF THE DEMOCRATIC UNIONIST
PARTY HELD AT RIVER HOUSE ON 1 FEBRUARY 1984 at 11.00 am

PRESENT:

MEMBERS: Sir Myles Humphreys (Chairman)
Mr J Allen
Mr P M Brand
Mr M E Connolly
Mr P M D Forde
Mr T J Shiels
*Mrs J Douglas
*Mr E Harper
*Mr J V Morrison
*Mrs M E O'Fee
*Mr B Sherlock

OFFICIALS: Mr W McC Taylor (Secretary)
Mr A H McAlister
Mr R J R Lavery
Mr R T Armstrong
Mr G D Thompson

RUC: Sir John Hermon
Mr W McGookin
Superintendent J Hamilton

DUP: Dr I R K Paisley
Mr J Allister
Mr G Campbell
Rev I Foster
Rev R T W McCrea
Mr P Robinson

Apologies: Mr E Turner and Mr R J White.

*Non-Members of the Policy Co-Ordinating Committee invited by
the Chairman to attend.

1. The Chairman welcomed the Members of the Democratic Unionist Party and introduced the Authority Members and the Chief Constable. He referred to the matters which the DUP had indicated beforehand they wished to discuss and invited the Authority Committee Chairmen to outline their areas of responsibility.

2. Manpower and Finance:

Mr Brand explained the Committee structure of the Authority and said that the Finance and Manpower Committee was responsible for determining manpower levels and for financial matters including budgetary control. He said that the present strength of the regular Force was 7979 and that the establishment had been increased progressively from 3000 in 1969 to the current level of 8000. The Full-time Reserve strength was 2321 compared to an approved establishment of 2500 and the Part-time Reserve was 2167 against an establishment of 4800. Annual expenditure on policing had increased from £12m in 1970/71 to £92m in 1978/79 and was presently £237m. Mr Brand added that police pay and allowances accounted for approximately 80% of the Authority's budget while civilian staff accounted for a further 7½%. He confirmed also that the Authority was considering a request from the Chief Constable for an increase of 500 in the establishment of the RUC.

3. Complaints and Public Relations:

Mr Shiels outlined the role of the Complaints and Public Relations Committee. He said that this Committee monitored on behalf of the Authority the investigation of complaints made against the RUC. While the 1970 Police Act had given this general responsibility to the Authority the Police Complaints Board had been established in 1977 and it had been given specific functions relating to complaints by members of the public against the police. He explained that the complaints investigation machinery was in the course of being reviewed nationally. The Authority welcomed the proposed changes which were incorporated in a Bill before Parliament and which included the introduction of an independent element in the investigation procedures. With regard to public relations Mr Shiels said the Authority was concerned about the perception of the RUC by the community generally and welcomed the opportunity to have discussions with forming groups and organisations.

4. Buildings and Supplies:

Mr Connolly referred to the functions of the Buildings and Supplies Committee which is responsible for the provision and maintenance of all necessary buildings equipment and supplies. He said that there are 170 police locations in the Province and that the Authority is engaged in an extensive major building programme. He referred particularly to the consideration which is being given to the provision of a new Training Centre which would enable the present

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centre at Enniskillen to be used as an operational base. Mr Connolly also gave details of expenditure on supplies, including telecommunication equipment and vehicles.

5. General Purposes:

Mr Allen spoke on the role of the General Purposes Committee which he said had a particular interest in the health and welfare of the Force as well as having responsibility for pay and allowances, conditions of service and legal matters including compensation claims.

6. Meetings between the Chief Constable and DUP:

Dr Paisley said that he and his DUP colleagues welcomed the opportunity to meet and speak to the Chief Constable. He referred to the meeting he had with Sir John Hermon following his appointment as Chief Constable and at which he had been invited to a further meeting in a year's time. The further meeting had not taken place and requests for such a meeting had not been met. He did not regard the meeting with the Authority as fulfilling the Chief Constable's obligation to meet elected representatives, although he freely admitted that relationships with officers at local level were good.

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The Chief Constable explained that it was impossible for him to accede to every request he received from individuals and groupings for meetings. He had to ensure that if one request was met it did not immediately lead to similar requests from others. Moreover there was the likelihood that meetings with him would tend to be politicised and this he was anxious to avoid. For these reasons he preferred to offer meetings with his Assistant Chief Constables. The Chief Constable agreed however that he would be prepared to meet with public representatives provided he could be satisfied that such meetings would not be used for the purpose of scoring political points.

7. Security Situation: Border Areas:

The DUP representatives expressed the belief that the war against terrorists was not being won. They were concerned about the safety and protection of the minority protestant community living in the border areas. The DUP had visited these areas and regarded the security as lamentable. Measures adopted by the security forces following the Darkley incident had not been sustained, army and police units had been withdrawn and border crossings were unguarded. The DUP contended that the border should be sealed.

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The Chief Constable explained that the command structure of the RUC was being strengthened and this coupled with his constant review of both policy and operations had had and was having an impact. With regard to detailed local command matters he asked that these should be taken up with the appropriate ACC. He assured the DUP representatives that there were still more resources deployed in border areas since the Darkley incident than before, but stressed that while strength was a significant factor good intelligence was of greater importance in defeating terrorism.

In response to further criticism of border security the Chief Constable confirmed that consideration was presently being given to the adoption of additional measures to improve the situation.

8. Security Situation: General:

In reply to accusations by the DUP that insufficient action was being taken to defeat terrorism, and that the terrorist threat and potential was greater now than ever before, the Chief Constable made a number of points. He said that his priorities were, first, the defeat of terrorism, second, the defeat of crime and third, reconciliation between the communities. While he was far from complacent the security situation had unquestionably improved and he was determined that progress would continue to be made. He expressed regret that similar progress had not been made on the political and economic fronts.

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The DUP questioned whether there was an even application of rule of law in the Province. They felt that there was too much concern about possible adverse reaction on the part of the minority community and suggested there were political constraints on the RUC. The Chief Constable said that good intelligence was coming from the minority and he was anxious not to alienate that part of the community. Having said that the RUC would act wherever and whenever necessary.

9. RUC Manpower:

The Chief Constable referred to the growth in strength of the RUC from 3000 in 1969 to the present level of 8000. He pointed out that because of changes in working conditions the increase was not as dramatic as the figure suggested. However he has sought approval for a further increase of 500 in manpower and he said that any necessary resources had never been denied to the RUC.

He mentioned that there had been abuses of overtime working in the past and firm management control had been essential. He confirmed that in a few areas initial enthusiasm had resulted in an overcurtailment of overtime working but these had been identified and rectified.

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Dr Paisley said that the RUC when only 3000 strong had the support of the USC. He thought a further 1500, rather than 500, might be a more appropriate increase in manpower.

10. Policing:

The DUP questioned again whether the security forces were having the degree of success outlined by the Chief Constable. Moreover they were concerned about the consequences of a failure to maintain any improvement in crime detection and in security generally. Dr Paisley referred to the support for SF and the public disorder which could be created.

He sounded a warning note of the serious consequences if the security forces did not have continued success.

The Chief Constable confirmed that the war against terrorism was being won. The situation was not worsening and the IRA was not stronger as alleged although it was better organised and more ruthless. He explained also, in reply to a question about a reduction in the rate of house searches that these were more selective and based on intelligence rather than on a block basis as previously.

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Rev McCrea referred to the terrorist enclave at Carrickmore, an area where he and Dr Paisley had been advised they should not travel. He felt and was supported by Rev Foster that the IRA should be put under much greater pressure.

11. Adjournment:

The Chairman agreed to a suggestion by Dr Paisley that the meeting should be adjourned and discussions continued on another date.

SECRETARIATE
29 February 1984