

E.R.

5404
6 FEB 1987

9/2
Miss McManus
1) Mr Jones
Mrs Pittchard
K me
by 9/2

Mr Blackwell

cc; PS/PUS (L&B)
Mr A W Stephens
Mr Chesterton
Mr Gilliland
Mr Innes
Mr Palmer
Mr Shannon

2) To a sub file

JL
9.2.87

SUPERGRASS TRIALS

I have seen PS/PUS' minute to you on this subject of 29 January asking how we might capitalise on the apparent fact that no one is now in prison solely on the evidence of a "converted terrorist".

2. If I may venture an opinion of my own, I would not be in favour of too obviously/^{pro}active publicity (and a fortiori not of an arranged PQ). This might appear to run counter to all that has been said publicly by Government on the unexceptionable character of such evidence, and might also be taken to imply that the NIO had more control over the administration of justice than was desirable, proper, or indeed the case.

3. However, I agree that we should ensure that the fact becomes known (including to the Irish) particularly since I hope we are now at the end of the period when it has been, partly as a result of supergrass trials, especially hard to build confidence in the administration of justice in Northern Ireland. My suggestion, therefore, would be that the fact be used as a throwaway line in speeches, in answers to supplementaries when we are Tops for Questions, and perhaps might make a mention in miscellaneous briefing material. But whatever we say, and indeed how we propose to say it, should be cleared, in advance, with the Law Officers.

SAMS

PP

P N BELL
544 February 1987

-6 FEB 87
71