

E.R.

● IOM 80 (3)

NOTE OF A MEETING HELD IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE ON  
FRIDAY 25 APRIL 1980 AT 12.00 pm

Present

Mr Marshall	Chairman
Mr Moriarty )	
Mr Davenport )	
Mr Blackwell )	NIO
Mr Bridges )	
Mr Benger )	
Mr Stephens )	
Mr Cousins )	
Mr Farthing )	
Brig. Myrtle )	MOD
Lt Col Bateman )	
Maj Martin )	
Maj Pheysey )	
Mr Newington	FCO

Area Reviews

Mr Davenport said that the first review concerning South Armagh had been completed and its conclusions had been noted by the Prime Minister. Work on the second area review on Londonderry was now complete and the draft report had been sent to the Chief Constable and the GOC. It was anticipated that the report would then be sent to the Secretary of State and dealt with in the same way as had the report on South Armagh. It was hoped that a draft report on East Tyrone would be ready by the end of May and the report on the review of Belfast should be available in draft by the end of June. Other areas, most notably Fermanagh, had been suggested for review but no decision on this was likely until summer. When all the reports had been completed it should be possible to draw them together and derive general lessons.

Yellow Card

The Chairman said that he had received a reply to his letter on this subject to MOD and would reply in due course. Mr Farthing said that

the Law Officers were aware of the Chairman's letter to Mr Stephen and were likely to agree the proposed new terms of the card.

The Chairman considered that the press was bound to learn of the revision of the Yellow Card and thought that it might be wise to issue a statement in advance to the effect that the Yellow Card had been made shorter and easier to understand whilst leaving its legal effect unaltered. Mr Stephen said that MOD would like to have time to consider this suggestion; at present they were keeping open the option of not revealing when the Card was revised.

#### The Electricity Interconnector

Mr Davenport said that there was general agreement in Northern Ireland on the desirability of restoring the Interconnector. In parallel with the discussions between the authorities in Northern Ireland and the Republic, the Chief Constable intended to approach the Garda Commissioner to ensure that when work was re-started the Garda would endeavour to prevent any disruption from their side of the Border. There had been further discussions with the Northern Ireland Electricity Service (NIES) who were understandably sensitive after IRA intimidation of their workers. The Managing Director was nonetheless hopeful that, given time, his workforce might be willing to resume work on the project. The security forces were very willing to provide protection for the workers but the Army, although probably capable of doing the job after training from NIES management, were not enthusiastic about undertaking the task on their own.

Mr Newington said that it had been agreed at Dublin on 15 April that both the Secretary of State and Mr Lenihan, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, would simultaneously issue statements on the restoration of the interconnector. He had recently received the draft text of Mr Lenihan's statement which was perhaps not as firm as the Irish had originally indicated. The Chairman thought it inadvisable to be too firm in our commitment

in view of the problems which we were likely to encounter if the NIES proved in the event unable to do the work themselves.

#### Force Levels

Mr Cousins said that there would be a House of Commons debate on Defence on Monday and Tuesday of next week (28 and 29 April). Ministers had been advised to answer questions about force levels in a general way unless the questioner exhibited specific knowledge of the proposed reductions in the Londonderry area in which case it would be necessary to admit these reductions.

#### Meeting between the Secretary of State and Mr Lenihan in Dublin on Tuesday 15 April

The Chairman said that there had been few concrete results arising from the meeting. There had been no problems over security and the Irish had expressed themselves as in favour of restoring the interconnector. It was clear that the Taoiseach had taken personal control of policy with regard to the North and indeed, the DFA had been somewhat frozen out. Mr Haughey wished to meet the Prime Minister briefly at Luxembourg over the next weekend in order to arrange a further meeting to discuss matters of mutual interest, including Northern Ireland. It might well be that this timetable would also suit our interests. The remainder of the discussion had centered on cross-border economic cooperation. Mr Newington said that we could not be certain whether the Taoiseach was seeking substantive changes in Northern Ireland or whether he was merely seeking to enhance his image for domestic political purposes.

#### The Political Conference

The Chairman said that the Conference had adjourned at the end of March having considered the entire agenda. No agreed conclusions had been reached but then none had been expected. It was valuable that the parties had been able to propound their respective viewpoints to each other. The basic problem however remained; both the SDLP and, it

would seem, Alliance, insisted on power-sharing, by which they meant seats for the minority in the Cabinet or its equivalent. The DUP and, it must be assumed, the OUP, were totally opposed to the idea. There was no real middle course and it was not within the gift of HMG to impose power-sharing if the majority parties were not willing to accept it. NIO was now seeking to devise arrangements which would enable there to be voluntary power-sharing if that were acceptable to the majority, but which, in default of this, would provide a system of safeguards whereby the minority would be able to delay or block initiatives from the majority which the minority found unacceptable. There was no prospect that the latter proposal would be acceptable to the minority at present, as they were committed to power-sharing. It might be that they would modify their stance if, as a result of a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach, they were convinced that nothing further could be achieved on their behalf by the Government of the Republic.

Proposals were to be put to MISC 24 which would meet on 30 April; at some stage OD would be presented with a draft Green Paper which would eventually go to the Cabinet. There was a potential problem over timing if the meeting between the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach were long delayed. Proposals could not be published before or immediately after this meeting; but, at the same time, it would be difficult for the Government to ask Parliament to renew the present constitutional arrangements in June or July (when current powers would expire) without indicating what the Government's plans for the future entailed. It was possible that the Conference would be resumed in September.

Mr Stephens said that MOD would prefer a Green to a White Paper as the latter could hardly fail to give some indications of the Government's preferred solution. The Chairman welcomed this view as there had been some backbench pressure for a White Paper. Mr Newington said that the Irish Embassy had enquired about the timetable for the publication of

either a Green or White Paper and put forward the view that specific proposals at this moment would almost certainly fail.

Mr Stephens said that he had heard of suggestions that any proposed Northern Ireland Executive or Assembly should have a committee set up to advise the Secretary of State on the exercise of his reserve powers. Although advisory committees were frequently troublesome because they tended to make irresponsible suggestions if they did not have responsibility for implementing them, in this case such a committee would be a reasonable arrangement, particularly as the Secretary of State's use of his reserve powers would be discussed in any event. The Chairman agreed that such a committee was desirable and said that NIO thought that it should be chaired by the Secretary of State who would then be in a position to receive the views of its members direct.