

File GC



10 DOWNING STREET
LONDON SW1A 2AA

THE PRIME MINISTER

28 January 1998

PERSONAL

Dear Ted,

In response to the sustained concern about the events of "Bloody Sunday" and in particular new information which has come to light, the Government intends to set up a Tribunal of Inquiry to look again into those events. The Inquiry will be established under the Tribunals of Inquiry (Evidence) Act 1921. The Inquiry may need to examine Government papers from the period when you were Prime Minister. I am therefore writing to you, on Privy Council terms, to let you know the proposed membership and terms of reference and, in accordance with past practice, to let you know how we propose to address the convention on access to papers of previous administrations.

We propose that the Committee should be chaired by Lord Justice Saville. We intend that he should be assisted by two other members, at least one of whom would come from outside the UK eg from the Commonwealth. We propose terms of reference for the Inquiry as follows:

"That it is expedient that a Tribunal be established for inquiring into a definite matter of urgent public importance, namely the events on Sunday 30 January 1972 which led to loss of life in connection with the procession

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in Londonderry on that day, taking account of any new information relevant to events on that day."

The final terms of reference will, of course, be those agreed by both Houses in the 1921 Act resolution.

It will be necessary to give the Inquiry access to the relevant papers from the period of your administration. I propose, in line with convention, that such papers should be provided only for the purposes of the Inquiry. Current Ministers will not have access to the papers unless or until they are published by the Inquiry. Members of previous administrations giving evidence to the Inquiry may have access to any papers which they saw in Government. This is the approach adopted in the case of the 1982 Franks Inquiry.

I hope to announce the Inquiry on Thursday 29 January. I would be grateful for confirmation that you are content with our proposed approach to the convention on access to papers of your administration. I have written in similar terms to William Hague, as the present leader of the Opposition.

Yours ever
Tony

The Right Honourable Sir Edward Heath, K.G., M.P.