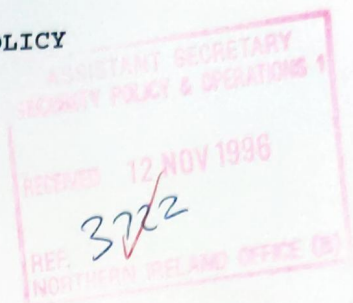


CONFIDENTIAL - POLICY



FROM: SIR JOHN WHEELER
12 November 1996

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B
Mr Steele - B
Mr Blackwell - B
Mr Leach - B
Mr Daniell - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Watkins - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr Smyth - B
Mrs Madden
Mr Hill (B&L) - B
Mr Perry - B
Mr Beeton - B
Mr Lavery - B
Mr Maccabe - B

Secretary of State (B&L) - B

TALKS: POLICING POLICY OPTIONS

I am grateful for Mrs Collins' submission of 8 November which provided further advice on the pressure points on policing. I have also noted Mr Steele's comments on the submission.

2. We go round this merry-go-round with great frequency. I do not believe that the dangers hinted at, even if they were acceptable, would make any difference to the attitude of many constitutional Nationalists towards policing in Northern Ireland. The RUC represents the most public manifestation of the British State in Northern Ireland and will always remain a source of conflict and objection to many Nationalists. I do not believe for one moment that any changes will result in a difference of figures for recruitment from the Nationalist population, and real change would only come about if the hierarchy of the Catholic church and other key opinion

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formers were to positively encourage Roman Catholics to take a police career. Tinkering here and there will cause huge outrage with the majority and might even promote another Drumcree, without any noticeable gain.

3. It is noticeable that some Roman Catholics do join services of the Crown (54% of Her Majesty's Customs and Excise in Northern Ireland are Roman Catholic); they join the armed forces (indeed there is still a tradition of young men from the Republic serving in the British Army); and, of course, a very large number of people from the minority community join the public services in Northern Ireland. So, I reiterate my fundamental point: that tinkering will gain us nothing other than to lose the Protestants; the issue is to work at how to get to the Roman Catholic hierarchy more involved. Perhaps we should work out a programme of how we should approach the Roman Catholic hierarchy. Could the Papal Nuncio in London help? Should we make more frequent contact with Rome and build up a relationship? Finally, if we must press a paper forward to the Talks process, something along the lines prepared will do, but I think it will prove to be a nightmare for us and I do not really believe in it.

Signed

THE RT HON SIR JOHN WHEELER DL MP