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WI/86/2841/RE

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B) (M)

cc: PS/Dr Boyson (L&B)(M)
PS/Mr Needham (L&B)(M)
PS/PUS (L&B)(M)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Brennan (M)
Mr Barry, DOE(NI)
Mr Fell, DED
Dr Quigley, DFP
Mr Stephens
Mr Chesterton (M)
Mr M Elliott
Mr Ferneyhough
Mr Gilliland
Mr Spence
Mr Bell (M)
Mr Blackwell
Mr Cowling (M)
Mr McConnell

CONTINGENCY PLANNING

1. At the meeting of the Presentational Strategy Group on 8 January, the Secretary of State said that he wished to ensure that there were adequate contingency plans to counter any attempts to disrupt the forces of government after the by-elections in pursuance of a campaign against the Anglo-Irish agreement. Accordingly, a working group was established under my chairmanship, to:

- a. analyse the possibilities of such disruption, including industrial action, refusal to pay rates and utilities bills, local government disruption and boycott of Ministers, and the support which might be given to these tactics in the community; and
- b. recommend counter-measures which the Government might be prepared to take.

In addition it was suggested that our report might include work carried out by DUS(L) in relation to the possible establishment of a provisional government by unionists. The report accordingly includes a contribution from NIO(L) based on Mr Brennan's consideration with Legal Advisers.

2. The working group included representatives of DOE, DFP, Central Secretariat, Press Office, and NIO. I regret that

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in the time available I have not been able to consult, or submit this report through, those Ministers with distinct departmental responsibilities in various areas. In the local government field, I gather that Mr Needham will be putting forward advice direct to the Secretary of State.

3. I attach our report. I would observe in particular that it covers a wide field, and would suggest that if the Secretary of State wishes to discuss matters further, he might find it most helpful to focus on each of the general areas in turn, and to deal with them individually with representatives of the lead Department in each case. I would hope that, given the co-ordinating role allotted to me, I might be associated with any meetings of that kind.



W J A INNES

15 January 1986

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SECRETTHE THREATThe Unionist Parties

1. Two months after the Summit at Hillsborough on 15 November there are no signs that the campaign of opposition to the Anglo-Irish Agreement by the unionist parties is beginning to flag or that the unity of the UUP and the DUP is in question. Their attention is now focussed on the fifteen by-elections to be held in the Province on 23 January. Political action after that date is likely to centre initially on:-
 - a. the return of unionist MPs to Westminster and subsequent withdrawal from Parliament when the Government makes clear that the outcome of the vote in the by-elections is irrelevant to its determination to press ahead with the Agreement; the withdrawal possibly could last until the next general election;
 - b. the completion of the report by the Assembly 'Grand Committee' on the Agreement;
 - c. the refusal to reintroduce the scrutiny powers of the Assembly or otherwise advise or have contact with NIO Ministers;
 - d. the continuing suspension of local councils in areas controlled by the unionists, possibly including failure to strike a rate as requested by 15 February;
 - e. continuing efforts by unionist councillors to suspend or boycott meetings of the various Boards;
 - f. calls on the unionist community at large to support such suspensions or boycotts, where withdrawal by unionist councillors alone is insufficient to suspend business;
 - g. calls on civil servants, and possibly members of the security forces, to refuse to implement decisions or action which are seen to flow from the Agreement.
2. More detailed indications of how the unionist parties intend to maintain their withdrawal of support from the governance of

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Northern Ireland are not available. Nevertheless, unionist politicians have indicated that action in the longer term might include a campaign of civil disobedience, including, for example, a rent and rates strike and non-payment of taxes.

The Loyalist Paramilitaries

3. The unionist camp has never been so united on one issue since the advent of the DUP in 1971. This unity, and the politicians' determination that opposition to the Agreement in the first place should be political and constitutional has served to reinforce the links at various levels between the political parties and the leaderships of the loyalist paramilitary groups (primarily the UDA). For the time being, we believe that the leaderships of the loyalist paramilitary groups will not waver from their open support for the politicians, although it is possible that more extreme elements, without the sanction of the leadership, might carry out isolated attacks on Catholics in pursuit of the opposition to the Agreement. Nevertheless, we cannot discount the possibility of retaliatory terrorist action being provoked, for instance, by the assassination by PIRA or INLA of a unionist politician or another prominent figure. Meanwhile, plans for terrorist operations against targets in the South, against the Secretariat and those connected with it and against Republicans and SDLP members have been discussed although there is no evidence at the moment that operations are imminent. Both the UDA and UVF continue to try to acquire explosives and further weapons.

Industrial Action

4. There is no evidence at the moment that specific plans are being made by Protestant workers within industry to mount a sustained strike or series of strikes in key industries. On the information available to us, the politicians and paramilitaries do not think they could gain support for such action for fear of unemployment and risk to the current standard of living. Nevertheless there is strong resentment within the Protestant workforce to the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which manifested itself particularly on 11 December when large numbers of the workers at Shorts, Harland and Wolff and the Sirocco engineering works in East Belfast joined the demonstration outside Maryfield. There were also demonstrations at Ballylumford power station and at

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GEC Larne. There is no doubt that further limited stoppages at these factories are a possibility in response to calls from their community leaders for industrial action; and the paramilitaries have shown in the past that they will try to enforce such demands.

DISTRICT COUNCILS AND PUBLIC BODIES

Background

5. Of the 26 District Councils in Northern Ireland, 18 are Unionist controlled and all are presently adopting a strategy of suspending or adjourning meetings without transacting normal business. Local Government legislation enables all Council functions to be delegated to Town Clerks with the exception of striking a rate, borrowing money and acquiring/disposing of land. Such powers have been delegated in all Council areas to date since the adjournments began in September 1985. During that time, no evidence has emerged of any Council failing to discharge its functions and so Departmental intervention has not yet been required.

6. There is power for 5 councillors or one-fifth of the members of the Council (whichever the greater) to requisition Council meetings but where this procedure has been employed, for example, in North Down and Belfast, the unionists attended the meeting and on a majority vote, adjourned business. In 11 of the 18 unionist-controlled councils, the non-unionists could in theory continue business since they have sufficient members to form a quorum. (The remaining 7 Councils would not have such a quorum.) If however the unionist councillors on those Councils withdrew or resigned then the remaining members could co-opt new members and so it is unlikely that the unionists would allow such a situation to come about.

Possible Difficulties if Councils do not Function

7. If the 18 Councils continue adjourning business, then the following difficulties will arise:-

- a. Failure to strike a District Council Rate. There is a statutory requirement for this to be made by 15 February and failure would prevent rate demands issuing, cause difficulty for striking the Regional Rate, and mean that

Councils would not have finance to maintain services in 1986/87.

- b. Failure to authorise expenditure for 1986/87. This function is an integral step of striking a rate and must take place to allow expenditure to be incurred from 1 April 1986.
- c. Failure to raise necessary loans. Several Councils so arrange their borrowing that they only raise necessary loans in March each year, and so they could have major financial difficulties before 31 March 1986. Expenditure on other capital works which are financed by borrowing could also be affected by the present action.
- d. The awarding of annual tenders, grants to voluntary organisations These functions take place before the beginning of a new financial year and are normally considered in detail by a full Council. These matters could be handled by Town Clerks, who in certain circumstances, would then be called upon to make political judgements and who may be unwilling to do so.
- e. Restriction of Delegation to Town Clerks. One Council has already restricted its delegated powers to its Chief Officer. If other Councils followed suit then there is considerable risk of further Council functions not being discharged fully and effectively.
- f. Failure to hold Annual General Meeting. There is a statutory requirement for each Council to have such a meeting in June of each year at which certain business must be transacted. Failure to meet would be in breach of this statutory requirement, although an existing Mayor/Chairman would remain in office until his successor is elected.

Proactive Disruption by Councillors

8. If the unionist-controlled Councils are seeking to cause maximum embarrassment to, and disruption for Government, they may decide to resume meetings but deliberately prevent the discharge of certain functions. They could, for example, seek to enlist the support of their rate payers for a decision not to collect refuse as a form of

protest, their justification being that their "heritage" is more important than a temporary absence of the service. This could be done on a single function basis in each Council area, with more functions and Councils being added as the "screw tightens". A deliberate decision not to bury the dead (unless part of the wider industrial action in paragraph 9) may not be considered appropriate because of the emotional reaction it could create, but other functions could be stopped in this way.

Possible Remedies

9. These difficulties above relate to failure by Council to provide the necessary legal authority to ensure the continued delivery of local government services. The Government would have two possible courses of action available to deal with the situations above.

- a. The first would be to use the default powers in existing local government legislation under which DOE would have to satisfy itself by way of appropriate investigation, that a Council had failed to discharge a function; would then order the Council to remedy the fault within a specified period; and then, if the Council refuses to comply with such a direction, would empower an officer of the Department to procure the exercise of the function (for example, to set a rate). While this power might be appropriate to use in the case of a single, one-off function, its wider use could produce a complicated situation of the existing Council and Department running separate functions within the same District Council area.
- b. The alternative would be for the removal of existing Councils and their replacement by Commissions. This would require an emergency Order in Council (a draft of which is already available) which would have to be made by the Privy Council and approved by Parliament within 40 days. The justification for such a course of action, as indicated in the draft legislation, would be that a Council was "unable or unwilling to perform duly and effectively any of its functions".

10. In considering which remedy would be most appropriate, the Government would have to consider the various functional and political

issues which arise. In this context, it is important to note that existing unionist councillors wish to retain their local Council position as a platform from which to make representations about the Agreement. Therefore while they would seem to want to create as much difficulty as possible for Government, they still wish to retain their representational role as elected councillors and have not yet indicated their intention of resigning/withdrawing. While the abolition of Councils would create political difficulties for Government, the threat of such abolition would certainly be a major factor to be taken into account by councillors in deciding on their action in the functions listed above.

11. The remedies in paragraph 9 above would be available in both situations ie either where a Council opted out of its responsibilities, or where they become deliberately obstructive in the delivery of functions. Application of the functional default remedy would be cumbersome in situations where the targets of councillors' action changed regularly, and would result in a 'stop-go' delivery of services since it could only be used following failure to discharge.

Industrial Action

12. The possible difficulties and remedies above relate to the legal authority of Councils. As part of the unionist strategy and in a deteriorating situation, two further major issues arise which must be considered:-

- a. If Government intervenes, either on a functional basis or by replacing Councils with Commissions, then questions must arise whether Council staff (particularly industrial staff) would continue to operate. It must be noted that the industrial staff in the Council areas affected are likely to have the same political sympathies as their councillors. Strike action is therefore a possibility although it would have an immediate impact on the financial situation of the individual workers concerned.
- b. Whether or not Government intervenes as above, there is also the possibility of general industrial action by Council workers as part of wider political action. In these situations the most important functions would be burial of

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the dead and refuse collection, requiring appropriate contingency action as the situation progresses. As far as refuse collection is concerned, there is a substantial lead-time before problems become serious. There are no contingency plans in relation to burials: in 1974, relatives were permitted to bury the dead.

Security

13. The possibility of intimidation also exists in the circumstances outlined above. There must be a distinct possibility of the intimidation of DOE staff/Commissioners appointed to secure the delivery of functions; of Council officers who would work for such appointees; and of the Council workforce which would be on the ground and which could be in either of the situations in paragraph 9 above.

Other Public Bodies

14. The effect of a unionist withdrawal from other public bodies in Northern Ireland is assessed as follows:

- a. Police Authority. The Police Authority has a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and 16 members currently. Six of the members are District Council nominees of whom 5 are unionists. If the latter withdrew there would still be 13 members against a quorum requirement of 8. The resignation of the 5 unionists would be equally ineffective since the Police Authority are empowered to act notwithstanding a vacancy in their numbers, and in any case the Secretary of State could use his powers to fill the vacancies.
- b. Area Health Boards. The resignation of unionist District councillors would have no effect on the ability of the 4 Area Health & Social Services Boards to carry out their functions. The Eastern Board, likely to be the worst affected, would lose only 9 of its 33 members and has a quorum of 9. In the unlikely event that Boards were unable to discharge their functions because insufficient members were prepared to participate, the Government could direct that Board's functions be undertaken by another body or person.

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- c. Area Library Boards. Resignation of unionist councillors from the 5 Area Education & Library Boards would also have an effect on the ability of the Boards to operate.
- d. Northern Ireland Housing Executive. Of the 10 members of the NIHE Board, 3 are unionist councillors and one, the Chairman, is a former member of the UUP. The Board could continue without the 3 unionist councillors and it is thought likely that the Chairman will remain in post.

INDUSTRIAL ACTIONThe Background

15. There is a wide range of possibilities in this field, from spasmodic or local and short-term disruption of a single service to more generalised short-term action to, ultimately, all-out opposition and strikes. Our assessment remains that, in the short and medium term at least, a general strike is unlikely, particularly in the present climate for employment, but that one day stoppages or specifically targetted disruptive action is a possibility.

16. The essence of a successful government operation is the adequate preparation of plans beforehand; the ability of Government and forces of law and order to respond quickly and flexibly; and maintenance of the initiative at all times with the public through the media. The most vital services are considered to be electricity supply, fuel and oil supplies, water and sewage services, the docks (for food and animal foodstuffs) and the fire service. Important but less critical are health, transport and social security services.

17. Departments have assured us that adequate plans exist to cope with the various scenarios which may arise. A crucial element in all the plans is the availability of manpower, and the capacity of each department and service to cope is closely related to this element. Plans exist (MACM plans) for those services identified in para 15 as whenever the lack of a workforce leads to problems.

18. The electricity service would operate as long as possible by load shedding and by supplying areas on a 24 hour rota basis. The MACM assistance would continue this system albeit on a more limited supply.

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- What they can achieve would very much depend on how many supervisory or managerial grades remain at work.

19. Fuel and oil supplies would operate normally with the industry probably introducing its normal rationing system used during periods of shortage of supply. The use of armed forces to supply and distribute fuel would require a formal rationing system operated by DED. Fuel would be supplied to essential users - hospitals, homes, ambulance services, fire services etc and from a limited number of designated petrol stations to other essential users approved by Government.

20. Water and sewage services would be constrained by manpower needs and supply of electricity. Water supplies could continue in untreated form and where gravity supply is possible. Sewage services are more crucial and the extent to which it is possible to let untreated sewage flow is an important factor in deciding what can be achieved under the specific circumstances. The MACM plan again would carry on what ever service is possible under the circumstances.

21. Docks would continue to operate until either supplies stop or manpower is not available. The MACM plan is geared to get the supplies out from the docks (flour, animal feedstuffs etc) out to distribution centres where at the worst the individuals will have to come and get their own supplies.

22. The Fire Service would operate normally as far as possible and would have recourse to the use of "yellow goddesses" (formerly green) should the Fire Service manpower not be available or be stretched beyond its limits.

Important Services

23. The Health Service would continue as normally as possible but does have plans to clear non-essential patients should it be necessary. Ambulance services have in the past usually continued to operate. Transport by road and rail would be dependant on fuel supplies and the nature of their business to continue operating. Air transport is similarly situated. With minimum reinforcements, however, an airhead for Ministers, VIPs, and senior civil servants at Aldergrove could be maintained. (The Harbour Airport, except in

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emergency, would probably be unsuitable for security reasons). There are no plans for maintenance of normal air travel via the civil air terminal by the armed forces. Social security have well tried contingency plans to operate even in the most difficult of circumstances

Counter-measures

24. Contingency plans exist for most emergencies, and are at a reasonable degree of readiness. Any further development would however immediately become overt; unless it were clearly necessary, it could imply a degree of government panic and merely worsen the situation. Ideally we should like a period of about 2 weeks to bring ourselves to full readiness, but we recognise that this is probably unrealistic, so that a period of some improvisation would initially be necessary. Before the 1977 strike, intelligence was able to provide 7 days' warning of disruption, and we assume that the same degree of notice would be available.

25. The crucial link in the contingency planning and the machinery to maintain the effort is the NIO Operations Room. It has links with NI Departments, security forces and essential services, and can be kept open twenty-four hours a day for collection and dissemination of information around the official machine. The NI Emergency Committee, which includes the essential departments and the security forces at senior level, would normally meet early every morning to determine tactics and necessary action at sensitive pressure points. The PR line would also be decided early each day.

26. The following points should particularly be borne in mind.

- a. The reaction of those still at work would be most important; accordingly
- b. the Government's PR effort would be critical; and
- c. the RUC, who would have the key role in maintaining law and order, would have to make every effort from the outset to prevent intimidation, the erection of barricades, etc;
- d. if all MACM plans were implemented, and disregarding any demands for troops for security purposes, the total

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requirement for troops would be over 5,200.

- e. while the prison service is not considered to be especially vulnerable, any stoppage which did occur would represent the largest direct call on already overstretched security forces.

WITHHOLDING OF PAYMENTS DUE TO GOVERNMENT AND PUBLIC BODIES

Background

27. In 1971 a rent and rates strike was used by the nationalist community as part of its protest against the introduction of internment. The strike received considerable support between 1971 and 1973. The existence of debt in nationalist areas and its recovery was an emotive issue throughout the seventies. In 1971 emergency legislation, the Payment for Debt (Emergency Provisions) Act, was passed to enable Government to recover debt, inter-alia, through deductions from the salaries of public sector employees and from social security benefits not included in the normal Supplementary Benefit Direct Payment Scheme. This legislation is still in operation and its provisions have been extensively used. The amount owed to the four major public sector creditor bodies viz Housing Rates, Electricity and Gas now totals £38m but withholding for political reasons is no longer significant.

The Prospects and Financial Impact of a Withholding Campaign

28. While Unionist politicians have threatened civil disobedience and a rent and rates strike as part of the protest against the Anglo-Irish Agreement, it is not clear whether after the by-elections unionist leaders will call for such action. The extent to which the unionist community would follow such a lead is uncertain but a proportion of Unionists in working class urban areas might well do so.

29. Payments in respect of domestic accounts totalled £551m in 1984/85: Rents - £155m, electricity payments - £185m, rates - £200m, and Belfast Gas payments - £22m⁷ approximately £46m per month. Income Tax and Customs and Excise including VAT yielded a total of £1400m per annum. There are other payments due to the public sector such as vehicle tax, (£10m per annum), TV licences etc. If any 'strike' was restricted to rent, rates, electricity and gas payments and say about 1/3 of the unionist population withheld payment, debt would accumulate at

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the rate of about £10m per month. In contrast, the Benefit Allocation Branch of DHSS (40 staff) recovered £2.74m from the Social Security benefits of debtors during the full year 1984/85.

30. A loss of revenue on this scale would be met by temporary borrowing. There would be no immediate and substantial public expenditure impact, though the interest on short-term borrowing would score. It would however impact upon the PSBR since the borrowing of Government Departments and public bodies would increase.

31. Because of normal arrangements to accommodate late payers, it would take time before wilful withholders participating in any 'strike' would be classified as debtors in 4 weeks for rents; 3 months for rates and 6 months for electricity. Normal recovery action would of course be instituted before such periods elapsed.

Counter-measures

32. Counter-measures to a campaign of wilful withholding could not achieve immediate success. Initially all that could be done apart from political persuasion would be to indicate publicly the Government's determination to use whatever methods necessary to ensure that all debts would eventually be recovered. Stronger recovery measures under the Payment for Debt Act could be announced but there are difficulties. If a 'strike' were to take place the limited weekly amounts currently deducted under Benefit Allocation might be increased and the rules altered in favour of creditor bodies. Consideration might also be given to applying Benefit Allocation to Child Benefit which is claimed widely by both employed and unemployed, and to the charging of interest on outstanding debt and the imposition of a collection charge, under Section 2 of the Payment for Debt Act. It would be difficult however to devise measures which distinguished in their impact between ordinary debtors and 'political' debtors. A substantial and sustained administrative effort would be required to recover the very large amounts of debt involved. This would mean a significant increase in DHSS Benefit Allocation staff and in DOE Rating Division. It would necessarily involve increased staffing in the NI Housing Executive and the NIES which would have to make applications to apply Benefit Allocation or other measures to debtors. It should also be noted that the co-operation of such bodies and their staff could not necessarily be guaranteed in a

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highly charged political situation. The only recourse against debtors not in receipt of any public sector payment would be through emergency enforcement orders, usually attachment of earnings, made by the Enforcement of Judgements Office, (EJO) under the Payment for Debt Act. The Master of the EJO has to be satisfied that withholding is 'wilful'. Creditor bodies again have to make application in each case to the Master of the EJO and a large number of cases would be difficult, if not impossible to handle in the short term.

Conclusion

33. If a limited strike (rent, rates, electricity and gas) were called, and only a proportion of the unionist population participated, then the financial implications would be serious but could be managed. Government would indicate a determination to recover every penny. It should be recognised that this could take years to achieve and would be difficult and costly in administrative effort. A more widely supported strike or one extended to involve individuals in refusing to pay fines eg for vehicle tax offences, or where industry and commerce refuse to pay major taxes (Income Tax, VAT etc) would pose problems on an entirely different scale. Services cannot be withdrawn in the short term, and it would be virtually impossible to distinguish between the ordinary and "striking" debtor.

ESTABLISHMENT OF A PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

34. There has been some speculation that unionists might seek to establish a provisional government - either based in the Assembly or elsewhere. Planning for such a contingency is complicated by the uncertainty about the precise form that any unionist action might take. Nevertheless consideration has been given to the legal sanctions that might be available to us.

35. If unionists sought by force (or possibly by some other illegal means) to usurp the government of the Kingdom, charges of treason or treason felony could be brought against them; and if they sought to excite disaffection against the constitution through the incitement of violence or the creation of disorder, they would be open to charges of sedition. If unionist action took the form of holding debates and passing their own "laws", and inviting the security forces and the

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courts to observe them, then there is a range of possible criminal offences that might be committed under laws whose purpose is to underpin the loyalty of the armed forces, RUC and courts. If, however, all that a provisional government did was to criticise the activities of HMG and profess to put forward alternative views that better represented the will of the Northern Ireland people, then there would be no clear course for legal action against them to take. (Equally, of course, since they have no access to the levers of actual power, their action would be of limited effect.)

36. Clearly, the initiating of prosecutions in the above circumstances would require the most careful thought in the light of the precise form of the protest. It would be an exceptional step: prosecutions for treason or sedition are extremely rare, the only ones this century being those for treason of Casement and Joyce.

37. Short of legal action against the protestors, it would be possible to deprive them of access to Parliament Buildings as a base for their protest through dissolution of the Assembly (prorogation would not be sufficient), though it would not of course be possible to prevent them from convening in alternative premises.

THE INFORMATION EFFORT

38. From the information point of view there are two aspects to consider in respect of all the possibilities discussed in this paper:

- a. the initial presentation of the case as seen by Government; and
- b. the information effort following a unionist decision to implement any of the disruptive actions previously identified.

Each aspect has its own particular problems (and opportunities) in terms of presentation and information strategy, but one single overriding consideration applies to both: the initiative must not be left in the hands of those pursuing disruptive action.

39. A good illustrative example is the prospect of unionist controlled councils refusing to strike a rate by the required date. Already there has been a public airing of such a possibility, be it merely

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sabre rattling or declared policy: But it is arguable that the average citizen has little idea of the implications of that act alone or the size of the resulting snowball. It is, therefore, essential that at the appropriate stage the public is made aware of all the consequences; and that process should be accompanied by the clearest possible indications of the Government's resolve to meet such a challenge. How either or both can be best achieved is for consideration. Some coat trailing of the Government's determination not to be bullied is desirable at an early stage, but if others are intent on confrontation, there can be no half measures in Government's approach and that, of course, includes information.

40. The same broad considerations apply to other forms of disruptive action, whether deliberate or manifestations of a policy of drift on the part of those advocating unconstitutional opposition to Government. It would not be the first time in Northern Ireland that such a policy of drift has generated a momentum of its own, sweeping along even those who had they considered the issue would not have participated.

41. Government therefore has a duty and a need to spell out in any one of the given areas the consequences, which have to include the refusal of Government to change policy. The fact that people insist on injuring themselves by putting their hand into the machine (the Agreement) does not mean that Government will get rid of the machine. Government action of course, needs to be tailored to individual circumstances. We are vulnerable to a concerted rent and rates strike, so that drawing attention to the possibility before we have real evidence of the risk would be counterproductive.

42. Effective presentation of information hinges therefore on something considerably more than a reaction to events; the facts have to be clearly explained to the public as part of a positive stance by Government overall. This level of activity can of course be sustained by an information effort with a capacity for operating on a 24-hour emergency basis using all the available techniques which can range from Ministerial interviews through advertising to mass distribution of leaflets.

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CONCLUSION

43. a. There are no signs of a lessening of the unionist campaign against the Anglo Irish Agreement, and the unionist camp has never been so united. After the by-elections, the likelihood is of political action with the possibility of civil disobedience in the longer term.
- b. At this stage, it is difficult to recommend precise counter-measures for specific situations. This paper has dealt with a range of hypothetical situations, and the reaction to these must be essentially political. What we have therefore sought to do is to illustrate the options available to Ministers and to indicate our stage of readiness. Unionists may prefer initially to offer passive resistance with the aim of forcing the Government to take action rather than take direct positive action themselves.
- c. We are fairly well placed in the fields of local government and industrial action, where we have appropriate forces, energy plans, and emergency machinery. Our defences against a widespread rent and rates strike are more open to question, but we have no firm evidence as yet as to the seriousness of the threat.
- d. The field covered in this paper is wide, and has involved a range of departmental interests. If the Secretary of State wishes to pursue the uses further, it might be helpful if he dealt with each block of work with officials of the lead department in each case.
- e. In all circumstances, the PR effort will be vital but is governed by the Policy decision. Before disruption begins, the Government can adopt a firm stance in some areas - eg local government - since we have powers to control the situation. But threatening noises in respect of, for example, a rent and rates strike where the Government's grasp is less strong, could be counterproductive.

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