

MANAGEMENT IN CONFIDENCE

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SEC  
10 APR 1991  
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FROM: PUS

3 APRIL 1991

*Confidence file*  
*10.1.91*

104/4.

MR McNeill

*To set for*  
*Expend Issues*  
*file.*

*MA*  
*9/4*

- cc. PS/Paymaster General (L&B) - B
- PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B
- PS/Mr Needham (L, DED&DOE)
- PS/Mr Hanley (L, DANI&DHSS)
- PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B
- Mr Fell
- Mr Ledlie - B
- Mr Pilling - B
- Mr Alston - B
- Mr Chesterton - B
- Mr A P Wilson - B
- Mr Wood (L&B) - B

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

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE - SECURITY AND POLITICAL AFFAIRS,  
DEPARTMENTAL MACHINERY

Your Ministerial Conference on 8 January discussed what machinery might usefully be set up at a senior level within the Office to address issues where security policy interacts with political, and economic and social policies. I apologise for some delay in responding to that; I have found it necessary to consult fairly widely.

2. The last Ministerial Conference, I understand, envisaged two separate committees, one to look primarily at issues where security policy is the dominant consideration and interacts with other policies, and the other where political matters predominate. However, having discussed the type of machinery that might be established with those most closely involved, my strong recommendation is that only one committee is actually needed, provided its terms of reference are drawn and operated flexibly enough to allow discussion of areas where either security or political matters have the leading role. It would also need to be able to remit a particular topic to an ad hoc working group from time to time. The committee would be chaired by the Paymaster General as Deputy Secretary of State; the Minister of State would attend as a matter of course, and in the absence of the Paymaster General take the Chair (I understand that both would find that arrangement acceptable). The Parliamentary Under Secretaries would attend as business required. The official members of the committee should I suggest include both NIO Deputy Secretaries (with their relevant Under Secretaries - Mr Alston and Mr Wilson - as alternates), Mr Hamilton from Central Secretariat, Mr Wood, Mr Bell and Mr McNeill. Other officials would attend as required to provide expertise on any specific issues under consideration at

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a particular meeting. Mr Fell or I might attend also on occasions, again as business required. I envisage the Secretariat being drawn from within SPOB, with Ministers notifying any items they would wish to raise through their Private Secretaries in advance. I attach a note on possible composition and terms of reference.

3. I do not doubt the need for some mechanism at the top of the Office to help Ministers and senior officials to consider issues where security and political, economic and social policy considerations interact and to reach conclusions or make recommendations to you about them. I believe the proposed single Ministerial committee structure can offer an effective way in which to address these important questions of policy interaction.

4. I think it strikes most of us who come new to the Northern Ireland Office how compartmentalised some of the work is, both because of logistical constraints and because of the inhibiting effect of the secrecy attached to security matters. The present strategy of the Office, and the policies it is pursuing, are all aimed at a single objective, and intended to complement each other in its achievement. I am sure we can adhere to the "need to know" principle without depriving Ministers or officials of information necessary to reach rounded and informed judgements on issues of this kind; and I hope the machinery I have recommended will help. Recent examples where such a committee could have been productive, spring readily to mind. The problems with the closure of Irish Street, Downpatrick and the security works necessary at the Royal Courts of Justice are but two.

5. I stand ready to discuss if needed.

Terms of Reference:

Signed: to consider, determine and advise the Secretary of State as required, on questions where

J A CHILCOT

security policy significantly affects and is affected by other policy considerations (including specifically relations between the security forces and the community).

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DRAFT 3.4.91

MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE ON SECURITY AND RELATED MATTERS (MCS)

Composition:

Paymaster General (Chairman)  
Minister of State  
Parliamentary Under Secretaries  
(as business requires)  
Mr Ledlie  
Mr Pilling  
Mr Hamilton  
Mr Wood  
Mr Bell  
Mr McNeill  
Other official representatives  
(as required)

Secretariat:

SPOB

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Terms of Reference:

to consider, determine and  
advise the Secretary of State  
as required, on questions where  
security policy significantly  
affects and is affected by  
other policy considerations  
[including specifically  
relations between the security  
forces and the community].