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NOT FOR CIRCULATION

NOTE OF A CABINET DISCUSSION ON TUESDAY 15 SEPTEMBER 1970

RUC APPOINTMENTS

The Prime Minister informed the Cabinet that Sir Arthur Young would be relinquishing his appointment at mid-November. The Chief Constable had recommended the appointment of his Deputy to succeed him in the post of Chief Constable. So that adverse political reaction to the change would be minimised, it was the Home Secretary's view that it would be appropriate for a new Deputy to be appointed from one of the English police forces. At the same time it was suggested that there should be a second Deputy who would be drawn from those eligible for appointment in the RUC. Mr Heath was keen that the English Deputy appointed should be a Roman Catholic.

Ministers felt that such a proposal demonstrated a lack of confidence in the Northern Ireland authorities and if adopted could only be interpreted as such. Apart from the consideration that the conditions were being created in which the post of Chief Constable might again be occupied by an English policeman if an Officer from an English force was now made Deputy, the acceptance of the latter appointment would, in the opinion of Ministers, provoke fresh political strains within the Unionist Party. It was held that any credit which might redound to the Government when an Ulsterman again became head of the RUC would be lost and the police image as well as the morale would suffer.

Replying to Ministers' criticisms of the apparent pressure from the British Government in the matter of appointments, the Prime Minister referred to the involvement of the Parliament at Westminster as well as Stormont which weighed with the Government in London and gave it cause to hope that the matter would be dealt with on lines which would <sup>be</sup> tactful politically. A Conservative Government would obviously wish to safeguard itself from political controversy on the subject and if it sought compromise, which was not conceded, an imposed decision might have to be accepted by Northern Ireland. There was, however, no insistence on acceptance of the suggestion which had been mentioned.

The Minister of Commerce said it could be justifiably claimed that the purposes for which Sir Arthur Young had been attached to the RUC had been accomplished and that there was no need for a continuing link of this sort with the British police forces at the level of Chief Constable or Deputy. It only remained to put into

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effect the desired interchange at a less senior level with other police forces to provide wider experience for RUC Officers.

The Prime Minister mentioned the over-riding qualification which would apply in future, that no member of the RUC could become Chief Constable unless he had gained experience in the service of a police force outside Northern Ireland. At this stage it would, however, not be possible to release any senior officer.

The Minister of Finance suggested that the transition might be made by making the most senior Assistant Chief Constable Deputy and bringing in a second Deputy from an English force on a short term secondment. The Prime Minister stated that Assistant Chief Constable Flanagan was the most senior in the rank and should be widely acceptable if appointed a Deputy by the Police Authority. Ministers agreed that his appointment would provide a satisfactory solution and that no appointment of a second Deputy was necessary.

It was also agreed that the proposal for giving officers experience in other forces should now be brought into practice and might be initiated by arranging for two Chief Superintendents to go on interchange for a period of six months.

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