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① Sir Ewart
② Pol
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PAB/1777/RE



cc: PS/S of S (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir E Bell ✓
Mr Angel
Miss Davies
Mr Merifield
Mr Abbott
Mr Edis

Mr Reeve

LONDONDERRY CITY COUNCIL

1. Over the last few weeks political relations in Londonderry City Council have become particularly strained. In part the strained relations can be traced back further and result from the last council elections when the DUP obtained 5 seats to the UUP's 4 and when the IIP obtained 4 seats. It is also the case that the existing SDLP councillors tend to be less able than SDLP councillors in the past.
2. Since then political relations have become increasingly difficult and there have been a number of issues which have had an adverse effect. The most recent issues have been council decisions (i) to seek Government approval to change the name of the council to Derry City Council (the name of the city is governed by Royal Charter which is administratively less easy to change) and (ii) to refuse to fly any flag (including the Union flag) other than the city flag from the Guildhall.
3. As a result of these recent decisions DUP councillors have had the matters raised in the Assembly and are talking about seeking to establish a separate district council for the Waterside. UUP councillors, though less extreme than the DUP, cannot afford to lag too far behind the DUP.
4. At this stage it is difficult to say how much of the heat being generated will subside when the need for electioneering no longer exists. However it does not bode well for the elections on 16 June for a new Mayor. Jim Guy (UUP) is the current deputy and on past practice would be elected Mayor. However it is far from certain that the SDLP will support his nomination this year or, indeed, that the UUP will put his name forward. It is possible that the SDLP would support him or another UUP candidate remaining as deputy but whether he or his party would be prepared to agree to this again is far from certain.
5. It remains to be seen if the campaign for a separate Waterside council subsides after the General Election. The DUP are seeking legal advice on the matter though so far the UUP have contented themselves

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with "giving it serious consideration". It may therefore subside though the possibility of a unionist withdrawal from Council affairs, perhaps for a limited period, is also being canvassed. We will keep an eye on developments.



D G McNEILL
Political Affairs Division

7 June 1983

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