

- (ii) the Governor could, if a prisoner behaved well, decide to restore some remission.

The Minister pointed out that only about one-third of the Loyalist protesters were in a position to benefit from any restoration of remission anyway.

Mr Carson said he thought that the recent mixed wing trial had been a test case. He felt it was pointless to attempt to integrate prisoners on a one to one basis, since at the end of the day it would mean there were around 200 Republicans left over.

Mr McKee said there were Loyalist prisoners in Magilligan who were conforming by working (although they were eating their meals in their cells) who had not had any remission restored to them. The Minister was able to tell Mr McKee that some prisoners at Magilligan had had remission restored by the Governor and he reminded Mr McKee that there was no blanket arrangement for remission.

Mr Smyth told the Minister that if he continued to mix Loyalist prisoners with Republicans it would end up with a prisoner being killed. The Minister pointed out that the only prisoner to have been killed in the prison so far had been the Loyalist murdered by another in a segregated wing. The Minister wondered if the delegation were urging him to segregate prisoners at Belfast and Magilligan prisons also. The Minister said he wanted to make it quite clear once and for all that there was no question of the Government agreeing to a prison system where prisoners would be able to divide into paramilitary groupings as part of the normal prison system.

Mr Robinson argued at great length that the Government was treating Republican prisoners more favourably than Loyalist ones since the promise of restoration of remission had been given rapidly after the ending of the hunger strike. The Minister pointed out that restoration of remission had not been granted to Republican prisoners at the end of their no work protest and that Loyalists had also benefited from restoration of remission at the end of the hunger strike.

Mr Robinson wanted to know if there was any truth in the rumour that the 10 Loyalist prisoners had been mixed with Republican prisoners who had been known to threaten violence to them. The Minister said that on this occasion the violence had been initiated by the Loyalist prisoners. Mr Robinson commented that this evened the situation up.

E.R.

Mr Robinson wanted to know if the Minister was saying that he was not prepared to respond to the Loyalist prisoners on this occasion as his predecessor had to Republican prisoners. The Minister told Mr Robinson that he had simply not made up his mind yet.

The Minister agreed with Mr Carson that if the prison officers' dispute was over, making more work available, it would make it easier for the Loyalist protesters to go back to work.

The Minister concluded the meeting by summarising the delegations' message to him as being:

- (i) would he make up his mind about the restoration of remission as soon as possible; and
- (ii) would his decision be that such remission should be restored.

The Minister agreed to write to Mr Smyth with details of punishments awarded to Loyalist prisoners in recent disturbances in comparison to those handed to Republican prisoners.

Claire Marson

CLAIRE MARSON
PS/Mr Scott

12 March 1984