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Inspection
Seems ok
22/2

RESTRICTED

Ref: SP(B) 30/119/15

PS/PUS (B)

CAM 24/11
Ms. Wilson
Mr. Brannigan
Mr. McKelvie - file A
cc: PS/PUS (L)
Mr A W Stephens
Mr Chesterton
Mr Innes
Mr Palmer
Mr Wood
Mr Bell
agree
1) Mr J Stephens - to see
2) Mr Jones by 24/2
JLT
23.2.87

SUPERGRASS TRIALS

With reference to your minute of 29 January, I have now consulted the Attorney General's Office who have confirmed my own view that it would be unwise to go out of our way to publicise the fact that no-one is in prison solely on the evidence of a converted terrorist.

In the first place to do so would contradict the line that we have adopted in the past that the Courts make their decisions with regard to all the evidence placed before them and that it is not possible to identify cases in which the eventual decision depended only on accomplice evidence. We should therefore be laying ourselves open to accusations of having deliberately misled MPs. More importantly however the portrayal of this information as a positive development would be tantamount to admitting that convictions based solely on accomplice evidence are both undesirable and unfair. This would inevitably strengthen the calls for the use of accomplice evidence to be banned which, if resisted, would place the prosecuting authorities in a very awkward position were further such cases to come forward.

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Nevertheless, I would agree that the information can be used in a helpful manner so as to confront critics of the supergrass trials, and would suggest that the more appropriate means would be in the likes of supplementary material for oral questions and briefing material for use in such debates as the Emergency Provisions Act renewal debate. I should therefore be grateful to know if PUS is content for us to publicise the information in this manner.

Brian Blackwell

B A BLACKWELL
Law and Order Division

19 February 1987