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CC: PS/SOS (B&L)
PS/Mr Scott (B&L)
Mr Stephens
Mr Chesterton
Mr Ferneyhough
Mr Gilliland
Mr Blackwell
Mr Shannon
Mr Bell
Mr McConnell
Mr Ferguson

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Mrs Mueby / M

*Pl arrange appropriate filing of
copies including code of conduct
(see last page). Mueby 8/9*

MR SCOTT'S MEETING WITH THE CENTRAL COMMITTEE OF THE POLICE FEDERATION
ON 2 SEPTEMBER 1986

Mr Scott met with the full Central Committee of the Police Federation on 2 September. Officials present were Mr Blackwell, Mr McConnell, Mr Hannigan, and Mr Hamilton (Press Office). The Minister began by welcoming the full Committee and said that he was delighted to have the opportunity to hear their views. He also thanked the RUC for all the work they do in such difficult circumstances. Mr Wright, Chairman of the Federation, then made his opening remarks, the basis of which I have attached at Annex A. Although Mr Wright used this briefing to a fairly large extent, he did add quite a few emotive statements. The RUC have gone through a very traumatic time since the signing of the Agreement. No RUC man likes the Agreement, but they still do their job. There had been 13 murders, 500 attacks on policemen, and 83 RUC families intimidated out of their homes since November of last year. The Agreement has caused nothing but trouble and strife, neighbours and friends have suddenly turned their backs and are questioning their actions. There is a widespread feeling that the conference is nothing but a bashing place for policemen. Cross-border security co-operation is not happening as the Garda are not capable of delivering what the RUC want. They have had no training and although willing to make promises nothing has yet been delivered. Gains for the RUC amount to nothing more than trouble, strife, death and injury. Mr Wright finished with a plea that the RUC should not be pushed into any more violent confrontations.

The Minister responded under the following headings:

(1) Building programme

Both the Minister and the Secretary of State take this matter very seriously. The Royal Engineers will be used wherever possible but this will not solve the whole problem. Some contractors were continuing and the RUC were helping with advice. It was important for the Government to accept that under no circumstances would any part of the UK not be open to proper policing. Cost would not be a factor in counteracting intimidation and although the Minister would like to see Northern Ireland people doing the work, other arrangements would be made if necessary. It was one of the Government's highest priorities at present.

(2) Autumn Package

The Minister replied to this part of Mr Wright's opening remarks simply by saying that there was no package. Many things that were in the so-called package actually pre-dated the Anglo Irish Agreement, for example parades and marches, incitement to hatred laws, and flags and emblems. The Minister then gave a resume of the Flags and Emblems Act in an attempt to clear up any misunderstandings that the Federation might have. He referred to it as a piece of redundant legislation and its repeal would bring Northern Ireland into line with legislation in the UK.

(3) Professionalism of the RUC

The Minister said that he had great admiration for the professionalism of the RUC. There was, however, no question of army support not being given if there was an operational need for this. He assured the Federation that it would be forthcoming if necessary. It would of course be a great coup for the IRA if the RUC were driven out of specific areas and replaced by the army. This had to be borne in mind.

(4) Cross-border security co-operation

Since the start of the present troubles the RUC had trebled in

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strength, obtained advanced technical equipment, and received training of a very high standard. The Garda had not developed in this way. It was not just a question of co-operation by officers on both sides of the border, much more meaningful was the development of a strategy of co-operation based on intelligence and surveillance. This is something however which takes time to develop.

The meeting then opened out into taking questions from all members of the Central Committee. The first topic to be brought up was the situation in Newry. The feeling was that troops should have been brought into the area last year, three men should not have had to die before this action was taken. The station was in ruins and nothing was being done to rectify this, the men felt neglected and life had become almost impossible. There was absolutely no confidence in the Government. The men on the ground had threatened not to continue outside duty except Court Service, protecting the station and bringing their own men in. The Minister replied that the GOC has now approved completion of the mortar proofing of Newry RUC station and the Royal Engineers have been tasked to do this. It is a matter of the highest priority. The Minister also reiterated that if requests are made for troops they will be met.

The next grievance to be aired was the feeling that the RUC had taken on much more of a military role over the years and that they were no longer a civilian force. One only had to look at the men in the border areas to see that this was the case. Their solution would be to put troops in where necessary, they were very much of the opinion that current numbers were not adequate. The Minister replied that if the RUC were driven out of any area, the IRA would claim this as a big success. It was up to the GOC and the Chief Constable to decide on where the line is drawn in terms of what is or is not a military role. Mr Elder, Secretary of the Federation, continued this theme by saying that the RUC treat terrorists as criminals. This is wrong - they are terrorists. The RUC accept that they are at war with these people and the cost of sacrifice is now too high. Something must be done and

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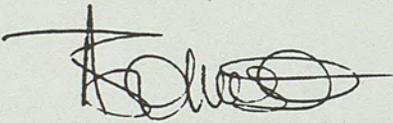
the Government must reconsider the actions that they are currently taking. The Minister replied that terrorists were most certainly criminals and the proper and practical way to deal with them was to bring them before the courts and to put them behind bars. If one compared the security statistics between 1975 and the present time, the figures were much lower. It showed that attrition had worked and there was a definite diminution in the level of terrorism. To portray the IRA as "warriors for the cause" was not the right way to solve the problem.

The next and lengthiest item to be discussed at the meeting was the affect that the Anglo-Irish Agreement had had on the ordinary policeman. Much concern was voiced over the attitude of friends and neighbours to police families. There was a lot of verbal abuse by neighbours in local shops and for the children at school. The point was made that these were respectable people who were doing this which made it all the worse. The Minister was very sympathetic to this problem and well understood the depth of feeling it invoked. Mr Elder then asked what had been achieved by the sacrifices of the RUC since the signing of the Agreement. All they ever seemed to hear was what the benefits might be to the nationalist community whereas the promised improvement in security just had not happened. The Minister offered in reply to write to the Chairman of the Federation about all aspects of the Anglo-Irish Agreement in answer to what had been said. This was welcomed by Mr Wright. (Mr McConnell - draft letter please).

The discussion then widened out to a more general attack on the Agreement. They felt that their standing as British subjects had diminished, that the Government has made a mistake, and that there was no possibility of the Agreement achieving anything as the vast majority of the people in Northern Ireland were opposed to it. One member made the point that something more positive and forthright should come out of the conferences rather than the usual agreed press statements which he preferred to as "wishy-washy". The Minister replied that the Secretary of State does indeed hold press conferences over and above the agreed communiques.

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Mr Wright concluded the proceedings by mentioning that they had now received from the Chief Constable the draft Code of Conduct. He sincerely hopes that the Federation were under no pressure to get a response in urgently and that there was no question of this matter being raised at the next meeting of the conference. He went on to say that he hoped that strong cognisance had been taken of the points raised during the course of the meeting and that he hoped there would be further opportunities in future to meet and talk to the Minister. Mr Scott agreed that further meetings would of course be a distinct possibility.



AMANDA JOHNSTON
PS/Mr Scott

5 September 1986