

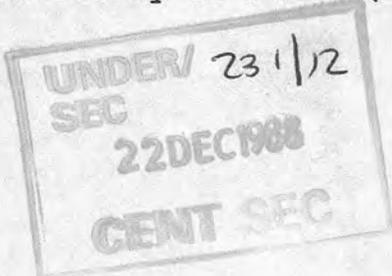
CONFIDENTIAL

NH 1/1  
Kw 17/1



From: S G Hewitt  
Law and Order Division  
Date: 22 December 1988

PS/Secretary of State (L&B) - B cc PS/Minister of State (L&B) - B



- PS/PUS (L&B) - M
- ① PS/Sir K Bloomfield
- Mr A W Stephens ✓
- Mr Burns - B
- Mr A Wilson - B
- Mr Knight
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Miles
- Mr Kirk - B
- Mr Bell - M

27/12  
② Mr. Spence  
3/11  
Mr Hampton  
Mr. Wilson 3/1/89

Mr Spence

see return

PROSCRIPTION OF SINN FEIN

You asked for advice on the Chief Constable's letter of 10 December in which he argues for the proscription of Sinn Fein.

2. To support his case, the Chief Constable refers to recent activities at the Pound Loney Club and the Sinn Fein centres in Beechmount and Strabane. According to the Chief Constable, the two Belfast clubs played a central role in the orchestration of street disturbances following the extradition of Robert Russell in August of this year; and the Strabane advice centre has been used by PIRA for storing weapons and debriefing suspects following interview by the RUC. He also claims that Sinn Fein centres are used to recruit members of the Provisional IRA.

3. This report confirms what we already knew in terms of the relationship between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA. The membership and command structures of the two organisations is closely related and inter-locked. We have known for some time that the Provisional IRA make particular use of the Pound Loney Club on Conway Street and that Sinn Fein were very much involved in the orchestration of demonstrations following Russell's extradition in the summer. We were also aware of the formation of Republican Youth a few months ago to form a recruiting base for PIRA: it is a fresh manifestation of a longstanding IRA practice of using Sinn Fein for recruitment and talent spotting purposes.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

4. The Chief Constable's letter does not therefore represent a new dimension in the proscription argument. We have never believed that Sinn Fein is a normal, constitutional party but, following a recent careful examination of the arguments, concluded that proscription would be an inappropriate and ineffective response. There is nothing in the Chief Constable's letter to suggest that the matter should now be re-examined. In the last few weeks, we have of course taken steps to ban Sinn Fein spokesmen from media interviews and will shortly be requiring their councillors, like all other councillors in Northern Ireland, to sign a declaration to the effect that they will not express support or approval for proscribed organisations or acts of terrorism. And the fact that Sinn Fein is not a proscribed organisation does not prevent the RUC from arresting or charging those involved in terrorism. This point is confirmed by the Chief Constable.

5. I attach a draft reply to the Chief Constable which makes it clear that the Secretary of State does not regard the information contained in his letter of 10 December as shifting the balance of advantage on proscription. It emphasises, however, that this matter is kept under constant review and invites the Chief Constable to keep the Secretary of State informed of developments.

(signed)

S G HEWITT  
Law and Order Division

22 December 1988

JI/5156

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

DRAFT LETTER FOR THE SECRETARY OF STATE TO SEND TO:-

Sir John Hermon OBE QPM  
Chief Constable  
Royal Ulster Constabulary  
Knock Road  
Belfast  
BT5 6LE

**SINN FEIN CENTRES**

Thank you for your letter of 10 December which follows on from the discussions we had at the Security Policy Meeting on 21 November.

I am grateful to you for bringing to my attention recent activities at the Pound Loney Club on Conway Street and the Sinn Fein advice centres in Beechmount and Strabane. These activities demonstrate very clearly the close relationship between Sinn Fein and the Provisional IRA. This is a point on which I have never been in any doubt and one which was carefully considered during the recent review of proscription. As you know, we concluded then that the proscription of Sinn Fein in current circumstances would not be an effective or appropriate response. We decided instead to take more targetted action; the Home Secretary has introduced regulations which prevent the broadcasting of interviews by or on behalf of Sinn Fein members and we will shortly be taking powers to require their councillors, along with all councillors in Northern Ireland, to sign a declaration that they will not express support for proscribed organisation or acts of terrorism.

CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

I continue to believe that this is the right response but I have not ruled out proscription altogether. It is something which I intend to keep under very careful review. In that context, I should welcome further reports on the activities of Sinn Fein and on the use which is made of their advice centres by the Provisional IRA. I am sure that we will return to this issue, from time to time, at our monthly security meetings.

hidden cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B)  
PS/Minister of State (L&B)  
PS/PUS (L&B)  
PS/Sir K Bloomfield  
Mr A W Stephens  
Mr Burns  
Mr Wilson  
Mr Knight  
Mr Miles  
Mr Thomas  
Mr Kirk  
Mr Bell  
Mr Hewitt

CONFIDENTIAL