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Department of Local Government

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CONFIDENTIAL NOTE

Passive resistance in the Six Counties will apparently involve such activities as -

- (1) Interference with traffic flow by sit-down protests, slow moving motorcades, driving of stock, tractors and farm machinery on main roads, interference with traffic signs etc.
- (2) Jamming of telephone lines to Government and local authority offices, jamming of mails with circulars or non-stamped envelopes, interference with television and radio broadcasts, wholesale wastage of domestic water, boycott of public scavenging, dumping of refuse on roads or at army posts.
- (3) Abuse of administrative processes by challenging names on the register of electors, appealing planning decisions, wholesale applications for pensions, public assistance etc., challenging all bills for electricity, telephones etc.
- (4) Withholding payment of licence fees e.g., driving licences, car licences, radio and television licences.
- (5) Work to rule by all sympathetic operatives.
- (6) Non-payment of rates.
- (7) Non-payment of rents of local authority houses.

A well organised campaign on these lines would make an impact. It would emphasise the polarisation of feeling in the Six Counties and would cause an administrative upset. Its long-term efficacy is, however, questionable. In the first place many of the activities would result in hardship to individuals, young, old and infirm and might constitute a health hazard. Further, the campaign would get support in only limited areas.

As regards numbers 6 and 7, we have had experience from time to time of campaigns for the withholding of rates and of local authority rents. The last occasion in which there was a no-rates campaign was in 1966/67. This campaign was initiated by the NFA. The effect was that at the end of the financial year the percentage of rates collected was reduced in all counties. The most serious cases were in Carlow and Monaghan where the rate warrant collected was reduced by 24%. The loss was, however, made up early in May when the campaign collapsed. Amongst the measures taken to counteract the non-payment of rates was the withholding of housing

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grants to farmers who had not paid their rates and the introduction of a provision in the Rates on Agriculture Land (Relief) Act 1967 to the effect that where a farmer's rates had not been paid by the end of the financial year the relief given by way of the agricultural grant was forfeited unless the county council resolved otherwise. It is likely that the Stormont Government would be able to take similar measures involving social service payments etc. As regards no-rent campaigns, we have had experience of various such campaigns. At the present time campaigns are in operation in one degree or another in Cork, Drogheda, Dundalk, Tullamore, Laois and Louth County Councils and Shannon Airport. These campaigns are generally organised by NATO of which the General Secretary, Mr. Matt Larkin, is associated with the propaganda in favour of the no-rent campaign in the Six Counties. This campaign includes as a target "repressive legislation" including the Prohibition of Forcible Entry and Occupation Bill.

In the present bitter climate of opinion in the North, it is very much on the cards that the authorities would counter a no-rents^{or no rates}/campaign by selective evictions and possibly by cutting off water supplies and other services.

Before lending any overt support to a passive resistance campaign in the North, the Government here would have to consider seriously its own position vis-a-vis any future campaigns for withholding of rents or rates or other taxes in the Republic. If it were to accept such campaigns as a valid means of inducing reforms across the Border it could hardly condemn similar activity in the Twenty-Six Counties which could be related to assertions of necessary reforms.

The only way in which support for a no-rent or no-rates campaign could be justified would be if one could be sure that the moneys withheld would not have to be paid ultimately to the Stormont public authorities. This would imply political change, by way of an alternative government, in the whole or part of the area within a foreseeable time.

There are a number of courses of action which will presumably be considered:-

- (1) Cash support for passive resistance from a fund to cover hardship cases e.g., loss of office, relinquishing employment etc.
- (2) International propaganda e.g., at O.E.C.D. and U.N.O. meetings.
- (3) Financial support for administration of selected anti-unionist activities in the Six Counties e.g., office and secretariat of S.D.L.P. to enable them inter alia to counter Unionist propaganda by collecting and disseminating factual evidence of continuing discrimination in law enforcement etc., and the stultifying of implementation of paper reforms.
- (4) Formal and open visits by members of the Oireachtas and surveys of conditions by civil service teams.

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- (5) The delineation on an objective basis of electoral constituencies for the whole of the Six Counties for local and parliamentary elections.
- (6) Survey of legislation to accommodate political change including absorption of northern unionists into an integrated society.
- (7) Recognition of role of Derry and other border areas in regional plans and establishment of joint working parties for regional planning and development.

The consequences of support for passive resistance should be weighed including the possibility of retaliatory economic action by the U.K. If the passive resistance campaign fails the Government in supporting it will be seriously embarrassed unless it is prepared to consider escalation of the conflict.