

Prime MinisterNORTHERN IRELAND COMMITTEE

1. You know, Jim Prior addressed the Committee last evening and expounded, most fully, the proposals which he had outlined to you on Tuesday.
2. Predictably, Jim was supported by van Straubenzee, Mates Tom Arnold (who was PPS to Humphrey throughout Humphrey's time as Secretary of State) and Mawhinney (who made a speech over a year ago advocating constitutional "progress" along the lines now being advocated by Jim).
3. Those against were Michael McNair-Wilson (most eloquent and persuasive), Christopher Murphy, Nigel Fisher (extremely well informed about Northern Ireland), Julian Amery and Barry Porter.
4. John Biggs-Davison has told me privately that he is dismayed by Jim's proposals. John is the deeply respected Chairman of the Committee.
5. The meeting was conducted in a perfectly civilised way and not very well attended because Geoffrey Howe was speaking at the time. The Party in Parliament is not all that interested in Northern Ireland.

29th January 1982

IAN GOW