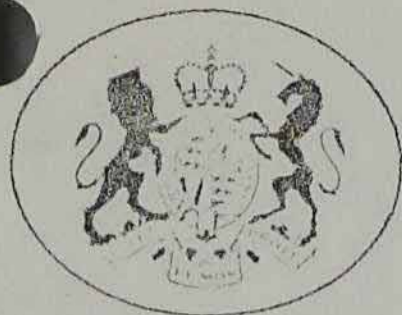


From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Prime Minister

To su.

ML

10x

10 October 1980

John Halliday Esq
Private Secretary
Home Office
50 Queen Anne's Gate
London SW1H 9AT

Dear John,

My Secretary of State's letter of 9 October warned of the possibility of a hunger strike by the 'H' Block protesters in support of their claim to special category status. The Republican prisoners' declaration of intent was in fact made today and I attach a copy of their statement. You will see that they propose to start their hunger strike on 27 October. Mr Atkins has issued the attached statement by way of a reply. This will be relayed to posts abroad and its content has been given to Mr Brynmor John (the Opposition spokesman on Northern Ireland).

I am also attaching, as background, the statement made by the then Home Secretary in July 1974 about compulsory feeding of prisoners - this line has been endorsed by the current Government, as my Secretary of State made clear in his answer to a Parliamentary Question about the medical care of prisoners on 16 November 1979 (copy attached).

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Prime Minister, the Foreign Secretary, the Defence Secretary, the Attorney General and members of 'H' Committee.

Yours sincerely
Mike Hopkins

M W HOPKINS

Over a very long period the Government has made clear their determination to create within Northern Ireland prisons a regime which will provide the most civilised possible conditions for those sentenced to terms of imprisonment for the commission of crimes - in some cases of the most serious nature.

That determination will be sustained.

The statement allegedly from Her Majesty's Prison Maze prisoners makes quite clear that the only issue is the creation of the "status of political prisoners".

Lord Gardiner and the European Commission of Human Rights among others have made clear that there is no basis in law or morality for such status.

The Government has made equally clear that while determined to make conditions in prison of the highest standard it is not prepared to create gradations of crime. There will be no compromise on the principle of political status.

Murder is murder wherever it is committed.

Successive Governments have also made clear their position on hunger strikes: that position has been unchanged since 1974, and remains so.

144/3
IMMEDIATE BY AIRMAIL

IS/IRB
RUC(L)

From: D.J. Gilliland (via D.J.W.)
Date: 10 October 1930 - 5.25pm

We have been asked to issue the following supplied statement to our office. The statement is a smuggled communication from the PRO of the blanket men in the H-Blocks.

We, the Republican POWs in H-Block, Long Kesh, demand as of right political recognition and that we be accorded the status of political prisoners. We claim this right as captured combatants in the continuing struggle for national liberation and self-determination. We refute most strongly the tag of criminal with which the British have attempted to label us in our struggle, and we point to the divisive, partitionist institution of the six-county state as the sole criminal aspect of the present conflict.

All of us were arrested under repressive laws, interrogated and often tortured in RUC barracks and processed through special non-jury courts where we were sentenced to lengthy terms of imprisonment. After this we were put in the H Block and were expected to bow the knee to the British administration and wear their criminal uniform. Attempts to criminalise us were designed to depoliticise yet the Irish national struggle.

We don't have to ^{recite} again the widespread, almost total forms of punishment, ~~deprivation~~ and deprivation we have been subjected to. All have failed to break our resistance.

For the past four years we have endured this brutality in deplorable conditions. We have been stripped naked and robbed of our individuality, yet we refuse to be broken. Further repression can only serve to strengthen our resolve and that of our gallant female comrades enduring the same hardships in Armagh jail.

During this period many individuals, religious figures and political organisations and sections of the media have condemned the way we have been treated. Yet despite appeals for a resolution of the H-Block protest the British Government has remained intransigent and has displayed vindictive arrogance in dealing with the problem. They refuse to treat this issue in a realistic manner which is just another reflection of their attitude to the entire Irish question.

Bearing in mind the serious implications of our final step not only for us but for our people we wish to make it clear that every channel has now been exhausted and, not wishing to break faith with those who from whom we have inherited our principles, we now commit ourselves to a hunger strike.

We call on the Irish peoples to lend us their support for our just demands and we are confident that this support will be very much in evidence in the coming days. We call on all solidarity and support groups to intensify their efforts and we also look forward with full confidence to the support of our exile countrymen in America and Australia.

We declare that political status is ours of right and we declare that from Monday 27 October, 1980, the hunger strike by a number of men representing H blocks 3, 4 and 5, will commence.

Our widely recognised resistance has carried us through four years of immense suffering and it shall carry us through to the bitter climax of death if necessary.

Signed

PRO

H Black Blanketmen

benefit or family income

Information is not available in this form, but it has been estimated that about 10 per cent of living more than the average distance from school are in receipt of a benefit and that about 10 per cent of school age belong to the category of supplementary benefit and the supplement.

Adult Education

asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science how many institutions and university courses of education conduct specialist courses in adult education.

Eighteen public sector colleges in England, and one university in Scotland, provide training in craft design and technology. Some of these also provide retraining in this subject for teachers in other subjects and one further provides only such a course.

School Meals

asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the responsibilities of teachers in supervising school meals; in what way the Government intend to change these responsibilities; how much money could be saved if the Government took on total responsibility for school meals; and to what number of schools this saving corresponds.

Under the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding signed by the Government and the teachers' unions, the Government will be responsible for the purchase of the food and the payment of the staff, while the schools will be responsible for the preparation and service of the meals.

The Government must retain overall responsibility for the conduct of the school meal, and for all that takes place in and around the school and there is a professional responsibility for the teaching staff as a whole and for the head teacher in fulfilling these responsibilities.

In these responsibilities the Government will continue to work with the representative local authorities and the teachers' unions. The cost of employing 10,000 midday supervisory staff, all of whom supervise the school meals, is currently about £46 million. It is not possible to say how much might be saved if teachers were to supervise the meals nor to what

number of teaching jobs this saving might correspond.

School Leavers

Mr. Pawsey asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science if, further to his written answer of 2 November, he will describe further the disruptive effect on final year courses, in view of the number of pupils likely to be involved.

Dr. Boyson: The question appears to assume that few pupils would be affected. I believe, on the contrary, that such a change in the law on school leaving would lead to increasing numbers of young people seeking offers of employment; and to disaffection among those forced to remain at school. If, during the fifth

year, classes were allowed to dwindle piecemeal, it could disrupt teaching and make it difficult to plan the use of resources sensibly. In such circumstances it seems that these pupils would derive minimal benefit from their last year.

Schools (Subsidies)

Mr. Richard Wainwright asked the Secretary of State for Education and Science what are the current subsidies on (a) school meals, (b) school transport and (c) school milk in each of the local education authorities in West Yorkshire and Greater Manchester.

Dr. Boyson: The net cost to public funds of these services in the areas in question in 1978-79 was as follows:

	School meals	School transport	School milk
West Yorkshire—			
Bradford	4,497	849	110
Calderdale	2,067	440	100
Kirklees	2,771	298	72
Leeds	5,918	1,299	174
Wakefield	2,789	523	129
Total	18,042	3,409	585
Greater Manchester—			
Bolton	2,617	313	111
Bury	1,461	160	59
Manchester	5,531	1,072	116
Oldham	1,890	204	45
Rochdale	2,044	235	68
Salford	2,450	232	107
Stockport	2,312	349	106
Tameside	2,076	263	109
Trafford	2,232	295	64
Wigan	2,963	307	76
Total	25,576	3,430	861

NORTHERN IRELAND

Prisoners (Medical Care)

Mr. Goodlad asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will make a statement about the arrangements for the medical care of prisoners in Northern Ireland, with particular reference to those prisoners in Maze prison who are breaking prison rules in an attempt to secure special treatment as political prisoners.

Mr. Humphrey Atkins: Prison inmates in Northern Ireland have access to medical facilities equivalent to those available to the general population. Medical staff are attached to the prisons, and can also call in consultants to give specialised advice and treatment as re-

quired, or refer prisoners to outside hospitals for out-patient treatment or for admission.

The doctors concerned with prisoners' health observe the same professional ethical principles as apply to the treatment of any other patients. In particular, treatment indicated in a prisoner's own interest is not forced upon him against his will. While prisoners can, therefore, deny themselves medical care by refusing to co-operate with the medical staff, medical care is never denied a prisoner on disciplinary grounds.

The current campaign by certain prisoners in Maze prison involves the creation of disgusting and unhygienic conditions, apparently with total disregard of

consequent risks to health, in support of demands for special category status. The Secretary of State has made it clear that the Government will not yield to these demands. To contain the health risk created, a number of special measures were introduced, including regular steam-cleaning and repainting of cells.

The full range of medical services is available to the protesting prisoners, with daily sick parades and with a medical officer and prison hospital officers available day and night. It is, however, part of the campaign that these prisoners do not co-operate with prison officers or clinical staff. A medical officer visits the cells at least once a week, to monitor and observe the internal conditions, personal hygiene standards and inmates' health, so far as this is practicable. It is not possible to maintain the same standards of care for prisoners who reject it as for the majority who co-operate in measures designed for their own welfare.

If the actions of individual prisoners should cause an unacceptable health hazard to other inmates, staff or the community, such measures as may be necessary will be taken to counter the risk; but it is not the practice, or the intention, to force medical care upon any prisoner for his own individual benefit.

This accords with the ethical and legal position in the general community, where measures to protect the individual's health are not forced on him against his will, but Public Health legislation provides for compulsory examination and isolation in the case of an infectious disease hazard.

Despite the conditions which the protesting prisoners have been creating since March 1978, there has so far been no evidence of any resulting illness.

Prisoners who reject normal hygienic standards of behaviour, and who refuse to co-operate in medical examination or treatment indicated for their individual welfare, do so at their own risk, and the consequences are entirely their own responsibility. I hope this is clearly understood by these prisoners and by those outside the prison who are directing or supporting the protest.

I shall continue to monitor the situation closely, and in the light of medical advice to take appropriate measures to

control the health risks created by the protest campaign.

Ulster College

Mr. Kilfedder asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland how many academic staff are employed by the Ulster college; and how many of these are employed on degree courses, teacher training, and on other courses.

Mr. Goodhart: The number of academic staff in post at the Ulster polytechnic on 31 March 1979 was 538. Academic staff are not recruited to teach on particular courses. Most of them teach across a range of courses.

Housing Stock (Belfast)

Mr. Wm. Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what was the total number of dwellings owned by Belfast corporation during the last year for which it was responsible for housing; and what is the approximate number of Housing Executive dwellings in the same area in 1979.

Mr. Goodhart [*pursuant to his reply, 13 November, c. 552*]: The number of dwellings owned by Belfast corporation in September 1971 was approximately 21,000. There are at present approximately 39,700 Northern Ireland Housing Executive dwellings in Belfast. These figures are not comparable because of differences between the boundaries of the former county borough council and the present Northern Ireland Housing Executive Belfast regional office area.

Driving Tests (Fees)

Mr. Wm. Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland if he will give the reasons for the increase in the fee for a heavy goods vehicle driving test from £8 to £30; and if he will publish the accounts of such tests for each of the last three years.

Mr. Goodhart [*pursuant to his reply, 13 November 1979, c. 554*]: This fee was increased to take account of increased costs since fees were last revised in April 1976 and to bring it into line with that for the same test in Great Britain.

Vehicle and driving test staff are responsible for the whole range of vehicle and driving tests and it is not possible to

give precise information on the heavy goods vehicle driving test alone. However, estimates for the last 3 years are:

1976-77
1977-78
1978-79

The income from fees over period is as follows:—

1976-77
1977-78
1978-79

Altnagelvin Hospital

Mr. Wm. Ross asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (1) what medical vacancies have occurred during the last 12 months; (2) what departments, in Altnagelvin Hospital, have been filled; and how many have been vacant;

Medical staff	
CONSULTANTS (12 posts)	
Anaesthetics	...
Chest medicine	...
Geriatrics	...
Obstetrics and gynaecology	...
Oral surgery	...
Orthopaedics	...
Ophthalmology	...
Radiology	...
Pathology	...
REGISTRARS (20 posts)	
Anaesthetics	...
Ear, nose and throat	...
General medicine	...
General surgery	...
Obstetrics and gynaecology	...
Oral surgery	...
Orthopaedics	...
Paediatrics	...
Radiology	...
SENIOR HOUSE OFFICERS (32 posts)	
Accident and emergency	...
Anaesthetics	...
Chest medicine	...
Ear, nose and throat	...
General medicine	...
General surgery	...
Geriatrics	...
Obstetrics and gynaecology	...
Orthopaedics	...
Paediatrics	...
Rheumatology	...
Venerology	...
HOUSE OFFICERS (10 posts)	
General medicine	...
General surgery	...
Geriatrics	...
Orthopaedics	...
Paediatrics	...
Rheumatology	...



STATEMENT IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS ON 17 JULY 1974 BY THE HOME SECRETARY

I will, with permission, Mr Speaker, make a statement about artificial feeding of prisoners.

On 23rd May, I said that I would review the position regarding compulsory feeding and the traditional view that a prison medical officer would be neglecting his duty if he were not prepared to feed artificially a prisoner on hunger strike, if necessary against his will, in order to preserve his health and life. Distasteful and objectionable though artificial feeding is, it has been judged preferable to allowing the prisoner to die or his health seriously to deteriorate.

I should like to pay tribute to the professional skill and compassion with which members of the prison medical service have discharged their responsibilities in circumstances which I know they have found difficult and distasteful.

The doctor's obligation is to the ethics of his profession and to his duty at common law; he is not required as a matter of prison practice to feed a prisoner artificially against the prisoner's will. Since there has been misunderstanding on this point, I think it is in the interests of prisoners, the medical profession and the public, that the procedures to be followed in future should leave no room for doubt.

I am advised that the common law duty placed upon persons in charge of a prisoner is to take such steps as are reasonable in the circumstances of each case to preserve the health and the life of the prisoner. In making their decision in respect of any particular case, they must have regard not merely to the dangers likely to flow from the prisoner's refusal of food but also to those likely to flow from the process of forced feeding itself, if it is resorted to, and particularly if it is resisted.

Accordingly, the future practice should, in my view, be that if a prisoner persists in refusing to accept any form of nourishment, the medical officer should first satisfy himself that the prisoner's capacity for rational judgement is unimpaired by illness, mental or physical. If the medical officer is so satisfied, he should seek confirmation of his opinion from an outside consultant. If the consultant confirms the opinion of the prison medical officer, the prisoner should be told that he will continue to receive medical



supervision and advice and that food will be made available to him. He should be informed that he will be removed to the prison hospital if and when this is considered appropriate. But it should be made clear to him that there is no rule of prison practice which requires the prison medical officer to resort to artificial feeding, whether by tube or intravenously. Finally, he should be plainly and categorically warned that the consequent and inevitable deterioration in his health may be allowed to continue without medical intervention, unless he specifically requests it.

I have discussed this subject with my right hon. Friends the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Northern Ireland, who have decided that the procedures I have outlined will apply also in Scotland and Northern Ireland.