

PRIME MINISTER.

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Minister of State

This is the background to
the row over
Governor Carey's N.I.
initiative. Mr Atkins'
press release is at
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GREAT GEORGE STREET,
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PRIME MINISTER

TALKS WITH GOVERNOR CAREY

You will want to know the background to Governor Carey's statement in New York on Monday, 6 August, that he had invited Humphrey Atkins and Michael O'Kennedy for talks in New York in September "to continue our work towards peace, security and an end to violence in Northern Ireland". The text of Governor Carey's statement is annexed.

2. Humphrey Atkins saw Governor Carey in London on Thursday, 2 August, for a talk lasting 1½ hours. He thanked him for his consistent help in condemning terrorism but told him that his recent article in the New York Daily News alleging political neglect of Ulster by the British Government had given great offence here because it was not true. He explained the nature of the political initiative we had taken by way of private consultations with all shades of opinion representing Ulster, both at Westminster and in the Province itself. He told him that political progress could only be achieved with the support of both communities; that each had a veto over what it deemed to be unacceptable; and that therefore anyone peddling Irish unity or simple majority rule was making progress less not more likely.

3. Governor Carey maintained that he was only being listened to in his condemnation of terrorism because he was also known to be working for political progress. This led on to his suggesting that it would be helpful if Humphrey Atkins were to visit New York privately and, at a meeting with leaders of Irish-American opinion which he would arrange there, explain to them as he had explained to him what we were trying to do for the political future of Ulster. Humphrey Atkins said that he would certainly consider this but made it clear that any such visit would have to take its place in the whole range of consultations on which we had embarked, and that in any case he would need to consult his colleagues before agreeing to it. When he suggested that the Secretary of State should join up

with Michael O'Kennedy for this purpose Humphrey Atkins said that he had already been in discussions with Mr O'Kennedy and could certainly see no objection to talking to him again.

4. Governor Carey telephoned Humphrey Atkins on Friday to say that after further consultation (including consultation with Mr O'Kennedy or his office) he would like to follow up his suggestion of a meeting in New York and would write to him about it within a few days. He developed his ideas to the point of saying that he thought it would be helpful if the meeting took place in New York in September and that of course it would be private.

5. In the event Governor Carey for obvious political motives issued his statement without reference either to Dublin or London on Monday, 6 August. We have still not received a formal proposal from him. The US State Department and the other leaders of Irish-American opinion also seem not to have been consulted or warned in advance.

6. UK reporting of Governor Carey's statement, because it conveyed the sense that he was convening a conference to negotiate a settlement, produced a predictable and strong reaction in Ulster: Protestant leaders condemned it outright and even the SDLP were doubtful what to make of it.

7. We have been making it clear to the media in London and Belfast that there is no question of the UK Government agreeing to "negotiate" a political solution to the problems of Ulster at such a meeting. Our briefing has emphasised the points put to Governor Carey in paragraph 2 above and stressed the importance we attach to ensuring that the initiative we have taken in our political discussions is fully understood both in the Republic and in the United States of America. We have also emphasised how necessary it is to dispel misunderstandings about the current state of Ulster, the need to combat and defeat terrorism, to restore policing throughout the Province, and to give full support to the legally constituted forces of law and order - which has obvious relevance to the pressures being put on the United States Government over the supply of arms to the Royal Ulster Constabulary.

8. The Secretary of State proposes not to respond immediately to Governor Carey's letter when it is received until we have an opportunity of discussing it with Peter Carrington.



9. I am copying this to other members of OD and to Sir John Hunt.

PP

MICHAEL ALISON

(Signed on behalf of the Minister of State
in his absence)

7 August 1979