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PRIME MINISTER

Rhodesia Sanctions: Further Inquiry

When the Cabinet discussed on 14th June their attitude to a further inquiry into breaches of Rhodesia sanctions (CC(79) 6th Meeting, Minute 8) they clearly preferred there to be no further inquiry beyond that already conducted by Mr. Bingham but agreed to defer final decisions until Lord Harlech, the Government's Special Representative in Africa, had returned from Nigeria and reported on his discussions. In arriving at this conclusion the Cabinet were also influenced by the fact that the Director of Public Prosecutions had still to reach decisions on whether any prosecutions should follow on his examination of the Bingham report. There was a worry that a decision against a further inquiry - essentially into the acts of members of the Labour Government at the time - would appear unfair if relatively minor figures in the oil companies were still at risk of prosecution and should subsequently actually be prosecuted.

2. Lord Harlech has reported and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary is believed to want the Cabinet now to decide that no further inquiry should be instituted and that an early announcement should be made to this effect. I say "believed to want" because this is known to have been his intention before he left for Baghdad but is subject to confirmation on his return tonight. Lord Carrington will no doubt let you know his latest thinking at the meeting of OD immediately preceding Cabinet.

3. The issue is one of timing rather than substance and needs to be set in the wider context of the Government's tactics towards a settlement in Rhodesia and the imminence of the meeting of Commonwealth Heads of Government. The choice is between an early announcement to clear the air and further delay for tactical reasons. My own feeling is that having delayed this long it would be best not to make an announcement immediately before Lusaka. If the Cabinet's choice falls on further delay it would no doubt be helpful, in



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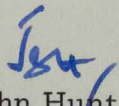
answering questions in Parliament, if the decision itself were delayed, in a formal sense, so that questions could continue to be fended off on the grounds that "no decision had yet been made".

#### HANDLING

4. You will want to invite the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary to make an oral presentation of his case. You will then want the advice of the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, in his capacity of Leader of the House of Commons, and the Lord Chancellor, as Leader of the House of Lords, on the Parliamentary aspects, and any indication the Attorney General may be able to give of when the Director of Public Prosecutions will be reaching his decisions on prosecutions following Bingham.

#### CONCLUSIONS

5. Subject to discussion the Cabinet can conclude -
- either (i) that a formal decision against a further inquiry and an announcement of that decision should again be deferred;
  - or (ii) that no further inquiry is to be instituted and that an early announcement to this effect should be made.
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John Hunt

4th July, 1979