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Ireland



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
GREAT GEORGE STREET,
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

Permanent Under Secretary

12 June 1980

K R Stowe CB, CVO

4676/PUS/L/

① cc Mr Gaffin
② Mr Whitmore O/R
M. to see
13m JS
12/6

David Wright, Esq.,
PS/Sir Robert Armstrong,
Cabinet Office,
LONDON SW1

Dear David,

SECURITY CO-ORDINATOR

As I told you on the 'phone, in the light of press speculation in The Times this morning, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland has decided to bring forward to 4pm this afternoon the announcement of the appointment of Sir Brooks Richards to succeed Sir Maurice Oldfield as Security Co-ordinator in Northern Ireland. The Prime Minister has agreed the terms of the NIO Press Notice and attributable background press guidance, and is being consulted about the change in timing of the announcement.

In dealing with the press we intend to use not only the attributable background press guidance but also the attached unattributable Question and Answer brief, the terms of which have been agreed with No. 10.

Our Press Office will be dealing with enquiries on this matter and I would be grateful if you and other recipients of this letter could ensure that any enquiries to your Departments are referred to us. It would clearly create great difficulties if any briefing took place which diverged even fractionally from the line we are taking.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to Sir Ian Bancroft, Sir Frank Cooper, Sir Michael Palliser, Sir Brian Cubbon and to Nick Sanders at No. 10.

Rob

R.L. SMITH
Private Secretary

yours sincerely

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UNATTRIBUTABLE

QUESTION & ANSWER BRIEF

Question: Why this timing?

Answer: Sir Maurice has carried out a major part of the task for which he was appointed. He has other interests mainly academic and is satisfied, as are the Prime Minister and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, that now is the appropriate time to return to them. It was always envisaged that his appointment would be for a comparatively short period.

Question: Health?

Answer: Sir Maurice is 64. He has had a recurrence of some minor ailments. There is nothing seriously wrong with him but he doesn't feel 100% fit at present. He thinks that the job of Security Co-ordinator is so important - and onerous - that it should be filled by someone who is 100% fit. So with some regrets he is handing over to successor.

Question: Why a successor at all?

Answer: A job of this importance does not come to a clear cut end. His successor will be involved in ensuring that consequential measures are carried forward.

Question: Why a Foreign Office man?

Answer: Sir Brooks Richards was the most suitable person available. There is no particular significance in the fact that he was formerly in the Diplomatic Service.

Question: Another intelligence officer in disguise?

Answer: No.

Question: Duties of the post?

Answer: The title of Security Co-ordinator explains the job. For obvious reasons we are not prepared to be more specific.

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