

In the light of Sir Robert Armstrong's

advice, agree that:-

CONFIDENTIAL

Yes no

a. Mr Gow should write to Mr Molyneux in the terms of the draft of Page A;

Yes no

b. Mr Prior should answer Mr Powell's written Question on the basis of Page B?

MR. WHITMORE

You have received two letters from the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland about the response to Mr. Molyneux's letter of 29th June to Mr. Gow, and the answer to Mr. Enoch Powell's Parliamentary Question.

Page c. —

2. I have discussed this with the Permanent Under Secretary at the Northern Ireland Office (Mr. Woodfield). I agree with him that it is desirable to follow up the statement that Mr. Sloan is prepared to make himself available to verify the information contained in the notes. Apart from the intrinsic incredibility of some aspects of the notes, Mr. Abbott is greatly incensed, and has only with some difficulty been persuaded from other action - a recourse to the courts, or a letter to The Times.

3. There was some inclination in the Northern Ireland Office to think that Mr. Sloan might be seen by the Secretary of State himself, or by Mr. Woodfield. I suggested that it would be injudicious and unsatisfactory for Mr. Prior to undertake such an interview. It is the kind of task better undertaken by someone not so directly involved; and by someone with some experience of the kind of interview that would be involved.

4. Since the conduct of a civil servant (Mr. Abbott) is in question, Mr. Woodfield and I thought that the best course might be that I should be asked, as Head of the Civil Service, to arrange for the interviewing of Mr. Sloan. I said that I should be prepared to do this, and that, if so asked I should request Mr. Denis Payne to undertake the interview. Mr. Payne is one of the panel of people whom we use for the purpose of conducting investigations into leaks of confidential information.

*Passage deleted and retained under Section 3(4).  
Wayland, 2 October 2012*

5. Mr. Payne is, I fear, currently on summer leave, and will not be back until 2nd August. The Northern Ireland Office do not consider that this delay need be material, provided that the reply to Mr. Molyneux is sent reasonably soon.

REA

Robert Armstrong