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NOTE OF A MEETING BETWEEN THE SECRETARY OF STATE AND MR ENOCH POWELL
IN NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE, LONDON ON 29 FEBRUARY 1984

The Secretary of State met Mr Enoch Powell in London on 29 February. Mr Powell called at short notice at his own request. Mr Lyon was present.

Mr Powell said that he had asked to see the Secretary of State in case he had not had an accurate account of the Ulster Unionist Party's Executive Meeting on 24 February. The Meeting had been a considerable success for Mr Molyneaux. Mr Molyneaux had given one of his most hard hitting speeches, making quite clear that party policy was to boycott the Assembly and that the Party depended on unity behind its leader. This had been very well received. Mr Ferguson had spoken in defence of his decision to rejoin the Assembly, and perhaps one other speaker had expressed sympathy. The rest had roundly condemned the rebels and had urged them to reconsider their decision.

Mr Powell noted that the Council would be meeting on 3 March. There might be some changes in office holders, but no significance should be attached to that. Mr Molyneaux might also elaborate a little on the alternatives to the Assembly. Mr Powell's view was that there was no prospect of any other members of the Unionist Party returning to the Assembly. It was possible that some of the rebels might change their minds and rejoin the boycott. While he himself did not advocate this course, he thought that if any other members came under pressure, Unionist Assembly Members might decide to resign their seats.

Mr Powell said that the messages which the Secretary of State had put out over recent months had been clearly understood. The Unionist MPs could "read the small print", and were no longer terrified of their constituents. He hoped that no

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attempt would be made to introduce change in one large step. While he recognised the need for Mr Molyneaux to maintain unity in the Party, he was not himself in favour of regional councils. Nor did he believe in the immediate abolition of the 1974 Act. A number of small steps might in due course, however, lead to that legislation being no longer necessary.

The Secretary of State said that the reports he had received of the Unionist Executive Meeting had been very similar to those described by Mr Powell. He recognised Mr Molyneaux's position, but he had found it difficult that Mr Molyneaux had suggested that he was having fruitful if private talks with the SDLP on some form of regional government tier when all the other evidence suggested that the SDLP saw no prospect of progress on this front.

J. M. Lyon

J M LYON
Private Secretary

24^e February 1984

cc PS/SofS (L&B) - M
PS/PUS (L&B) - M
Mr Brennan
Mr Angel
Mr Merifield - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Reeve - M
Mr Bickham

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