



be PC

17A

10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

21 May 1985

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS:
NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

The Prime Minister has considered the Northern Ireland Secretary's minute of 17 May conveying Sir John Hermon's comments on the Taoiseach's proposals for an unarmed local community police force. She agrees that it would be useful for officials to explain to their Irish counterparts why we think the proposal impracticable.

I am copying this letter to Len Appleyard (Foreign and Commonwealth Office) and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

(Charles Powell)

J. Daniell, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.

JB



*Prime Minister
Agree that officials
should explain to their
Irish counterparts why
the Trovitch's ideas
are not practicable?
CDP 2095*

Yes no

PRIME MINISTER

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS : NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICING

When you met him on 30 March, Garrett FitzGerald suggested that the establishment of an unarmed local community police force might be one of the measures which we could introduce to help build the confidence of the minority community in Northern Ireland. He did not envisage this replacing in any way the role of the RUC, but suggested that such a force might help to meet local needs such as, for instance, providing the protection necessary to re-open the sub-post office in the Creggan. You undertook to consult the RUC.

2. I have since talked to Sir John Hermon about Dr FitzGerald's proposals. Having considered the idea as positively as he could, the Chief Constable has concluded that the dangers of terrorist infiltration and manipulation are too great in present circumstances. He believes that, however unintentionally, the proposal raises the spectre of vigilante forces and no-go areas. There would also be practical problems, not least in establishing such a force in areas like the Creggan in Londonderry where intimidation is most pervasive.

3. The Chief Constable does not believe that such a force should be seen as any substitute for the minority accepting the offers which are already available for greater participation in police affairs - in particular by accepting appointments to the Police Authority. He resents and deplores the reluctance of nationalists - and Irish Ministers - to acknowledge the efforts made by the RUC to reflect and to serve the minority community, including the appointment of Roman Catholic officers to senior and influential posts in

SECRET

PERSONAL

the RUC in greater proportions than the Catholic membership of the Force; the close similarity between the clear-up rates for crimes in West and East Belfast; and the increasing use of neighbourhood police teams in areas such as West Belfast and Londonderry West of the Foyle.

4. I accept the Chief Constable's judgement on the impracticability of the Taoiseach's proposal. The question of the Creggan sub-post office is really not relevant. The specific problem there is not that the RUC do not patrol the area - they do - but that no-one has so far found a way of regularly getting cash to the sub-post office without putting post office employees and the security forces at an unacceptable risk. The Chief Constable is clearly right in saying that an unarmed local force in the Creggan would not overcome this problem.

5. I am sure too that the Chief Constable is right to put the emphasis on persuading the minority community to accept the measures we already have on offer to help build their confidence and participation in the police. As well as the examples referred to by the Chief Constable, our proposals for reconstituting the Police Complaints Board should be seen in this light. We are continuing to try to make progress with the minority in all these areas, and would look to any general agreement with the Irish to give this fresh impetus. To pursue at this stage the idea of an unarmed neighbourhood force would be an unwelcome diversion, though I suppose its time might one day come.

6. If you thought it necessary, in the light of your discussions with Dr FitzGerald, our officials could go over this ground with Irish officials on the lines set out in this minute.

7. I am copying this to the Foreign Secretary and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

17 May 1985

D.H.

SECRET

PERSONAL