

CONFIDENTIAL

PRIME MINISTER

MEETING WITH THE NORTHERN IRELAND SECRETARY

Mr. King has asked to see you tomorrow. His main purpose is to begin to take your mind on the way ahead in Northern Ireland after the by-elections in January. I do not think he has any really specific ideas. The key seems to me to be to plug steadily away with cooperation under the Agreement, demonstrating that it can produce some real benefits, while bringing strong pressure to bear on the SDLP to take part in discussions on devolution. The Government's ability to resist "non-cooperation" from the Unionist community will depend heavily on the continued loyalty and efficiency of the RUC and the Northern Ireland Civil Service. There seems no reason at present to question these.

Two other points which Mr. King may raise are:

- (i) Need for help from the Royal Engineers for the police building programme. You have written in support and I think Mr. Heseltine will agree.
- (ii) The costs of the Inter-Governmental Conference and the Secretariat. Mr. King is asking for an addition to his programme for this and will lobby for your support. The Treasury are resisting, and saying that in the first instance at least the costs must be met from the existing law and order budget or from re-arranging the Northern Ireland Office allocation within the Northern Ireland block. I do not think you should take sides at this stage.

CDR

C.D. POWELL

18 December 1985

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