

Ref. A086/386

PRIME MINISTER

Cabinet: Northern Ireland

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland will probably wish to inform the Cabinet of an impending step caused by the non-co-operation of unionists in local councils in Northern Ireland.

2. A number of councils dominated by unionists have declared their intention not to set a rate by the required date of 15 February. The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland therefore proposes to introduce an Order in Council under the urgent procedure, to take effect on 12 February, which would enable the Government to appoint Commissioners who would set the rate.

3. It is possible that the introduction of the Order in Council or the setting of rates by Commissioners will cause some moderate unionist councillors to reconsider their present refusal to carry out their functions. On this, among other things, will depend the answer to the question whether the new Commissioners should undertake other functions in addition to setting a rate.

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ROBERT ARMSTRONG

5 February 1986