



10 DOWNING STREET

From the Private Secretary

4 April, 1985.

Reform of Police Complaints System

Thank you for your letter of 1 April about the proposed reform of the Police Complaints system. The Prime Minister has noted the Northern Ireland Secretary's intention to publish a consultation paper on 11 April.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Attorney General and Sir Robert Armstrong.

(C.D. Powell)

N.D. Ward, Esq.,
Northern Ireland Office.



Charles Powell Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

1st April 1985

Dear Mr Powell,

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REFORM OF POLICE COMPLAINTS SYSTEM

Robin Butler's letter of 18 March drew attention to the need to let you have in good time papers requiring the Prime Minister's attention before Easter. One such matter of which the Prime Minister may wish to be aware is the publication of a discussion document on the police complaints system in Northern Ireland.

The Prime Minister will already be aware of Mr Hurd's intention to legislate for the reform of the police complaints system in Northern Ireland along broadly the same lines as the changes being introduced for England and Wales in the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984. The main elements of the Secretary of State's proposals are:

- (i) the creation of a new Police Complaints Commission (to replace the existing Board) which would be empowered to supervise the investigation of the most serious complaints;
- (ii) the introduction of a flexible system for resolving minor complaints without recourse to formal investigation;
- (iii) repeal of the power vested in the Police Authority under Section 13 of the Police Act (Northern Ireland) 1970 which allows it to convene a tribunal to consider a report of complaints matters which affect or appear to affect the public interest. This power proved to be deficient on the one occasion it has been used and the new proposals are designed in part to provide an effective substitute;
- (iv) a reserve power for the Secretary of State to ask the Commission to supervise the investigation of matters where there is some indication that a police officer may have committed a criminal or disciplinary offence, even though a formal complaint has not been lodged, in the public interest. (This proposal goes beyond what is enacted for England and Wales);



- (v) changes in the arrangements for police disciplinary hearings and appeals aimed principally at strengthening the safeguards available to police officers.

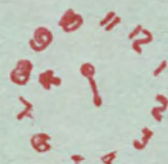
There is a considerable political dimension to and interest in the Government's plans in this issue in Northern Ireland and the Secretary of State intends that the proposals should be given wide publicity so that all concerned should have full opportunity to comment. Mr Hurd would wish the Prime Minister to know of his intention to publish a consultation paper on 11 April. A copy is enclosed for information.

The main Political Parties here know of the Secretary of State's plans to consult interested parties, as do the Irish Government. Arrangements have been made to let the various parties, including Mr Peter Barry and the Department of Foreign Affairs, to have advance copies of the consultation paper for information and informal comment.

I am copying this letter to Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Foreign Secretary, the Attorney General and to Sir Robert Armstrong.

yours sincerely,
J. H. Coleman

MP N D WARD



01 APR 1965