



From: The Rt. Hon. J. ENOCH POWELL, M.B.E., M.P.,

House of Commons,
London, S.W.1.

PERSONAL

Dear Sir Robert,

CABINET OFFICE
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FILE No.

24th September 1982.

I enclose a speech which I am delivering tomorrow. I did not find it possible to say what I had to say without conveying, at least by implication, a reflection upon yourself; but I am not happy to have found this necessary, and I would rather be in the position of supporting and defending the servants of government than of exposing them to public criticism and attack.

This leads me to wonder if you would be open to the suggestion of our meeting personally to talk about this subject. I hope you would. In view of the involvement of the Prime Minister's responsibility, I am sending a copy of this to her P.P.S.

Yours sincerely,
Enoch Powell

Sir Robert Armstrong, K.C.B., C.V.O.,
10, Downing Street,
London, S.W.1.

EMBARGO: Time of Delivery

Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell, MP, to the Annual Dinner of the Young Newspapermen's Association at the Culloden Hotel, Belfast at 8 p.m. Saturday, 25th September, 1982.

It was Walter Bagehot who, by a brilliant characterisation, once described his countrymen as "deferential". I do not think there is room for doubt about the general aptness of the epithet; but the public and the newspaper profession itself would probably not choose "deferential" as the most obvious description to apply to the Press. On the contrary, it is ruthless pursuit and exposure of the truth, uninhibited by fear or favour - and least of all by fear or favour of politicians or governments - that is assumed to distinguish the British Press.

It would be in the public interest if that assumption were always well-founded. We, however, who are in the business of politics learn by experience that the assumption is often sadly wide of the fact, and that the Press is capable of turning a blind eye to matters even of deep public concern when the possessors of political power and patronage prefer they should not be perceived or investigated. I want to illustrate that proposition in the recent context of Northern Ireland, not so much because the venue of your meeting tonight is in this province as because "deeds ill done" in this part of the kingdom deeply touch the honour, the well-being and the safety of the nation as a whole.

I am not, and I emphasise this, directing what I have to say at the press of this province itself. It is natural and understandable that, where so much of the information and briefing is bound to come from government - from "Stormont", as we say - those who are dependent upon this material should not court excommunication by indiscreet disclosure or by impertinent curiosity. It is also natural, if a political party, believed important enough to affect circulation, were to express dissatisfaction with the coverage or presentation being received, steps should be taken to remedy the cause of discontent. Such considerations, however, do

not extend to the national press, where evidence of uninquisitiveness would give more occasion for surprise and anxiety.

In June this year, in the course of debate on the Bill to establish an elected assembly in Northern Ireland, I took, after long deliberation, a serious and unusual step, and one which a privy councillor would not take without grave cause and good reason. I quoted from an interview given privately in February 1981 by a named civil servant in the Northern Ireland Office, which cast a vivid but sinister light upon the motives and context of the legislation and verified a prediction made at the time of the last Election by a Conservative Party adviser as to the course of events which would follow in Northern Ireland after the change of government.

The statements in the interview amounted to a demonstration that successive Secretaries of State and the Prime Minister herself had been and were the witting or unwitting executors, stage by stage, of a consistent and continuing process devised by officials, which was designed to result in an all-Ireland state embracing Ulster.

The full note of the interview was communicated by the Leader of my Party to the Prime Minister and thus to the Secretary of State, and copies were available to the Press and to interested members of the House of Commons. I am not going to overindulge in quotation; but the nature and importance of the material may be illustrated by one long excerpt from a subsequent interview given in November 1981 in the same circumstances, the full text of which has been similarly communicated by Mr. Molyneux. I quote (Mr. Clive Abbott, the civil servant in question, is speaking):

The Heath Government in March 1973 acknowledged the Irish Dimension. Rees helped to keep up momentum in the first 3/4 months of his office. After the fall of the power-sharing government we had to rethink it all. Roy Mason stopped all political movement. All the emphasis was on security co-operation

and nothing else. Anglo/Irish relations in other areas were not very good. On the security side the IRA came near to total defeat. Thatcher, when she first came to power, wanted to continue this emphasis on security co-operation only, and she wanted to bring to fruition the Neave idea of a return to local government. In the past 2½ years it has come to be recognised by No. 10 that the Republic must have some sort of say in the constitutional position of N.I. One should not get too excited over Fitzgerald's proposals to change articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution. It will be hard to get them changed in terms of domestic rule. But it is a way of holding a pistol to H.M.G.'s head and putting pressure on us for further movement. I don't think Fitzgerald has thought it through. It won't change Protestant opinion. The Dublin Summit of December 1980 was really about high visibility. Thatcher wanted a lot of gold braid in front. Howe and a few other ministers didn't really know why they were there, he and others were told just to shut up and smile. Thatcher recognized in that Summit that she now aims to act in the interest of the United Kingdom as a whole, not just N.I. and unionists are going to have to recognize that she is entitled to have this view taken seriously. The hunger-strike showed what advances have been made. Fitzgerald, by and large, kept his side of the bargain. He slapped down O'Leary when he was inert. He didn't want to upset the apple-cart, because he knew there was a summit coming up. The hunger strike resulted in a lot of diplomatic pressure being put on us especially from France and the Irish-American lobby."

That is one excerpt - here is the other.

"In any final settlement for the island of Ireland the entire Irish situation will have to be re-written. There will also be a considerable degree of autonomy in any future federal Ireland, although it will be a lopsided federation with one 26-county unit and one 6-county unit. But a political settlement for the island will have to be fudged, and there are a number of ways this can be done. (1) A new federal republic which would come into existence would join NATO; if partition is removed, then the Dublin Government have said that this would be no problem. (2) Alongside this the Commonwealth can be brought into practice. It is in effect a loose federation of English-speaking states, and we can play up the Crown or play it down, depending on who we are talking to. We can say to the Unionists: look, the Queen is the head of the Commonwealth, and let them fly their flags on certain occasions and keep them happy. Then we can say to the Republic that India is a republic with a president, yet a member of the Commonwealth."

I need not underline the intense interest and importance of this material, provided only that it is substantially genuine. That it is so, has been doubted by no political correspondent at Westminster to whom I have spoken. Indeed, there is no room for doubt, for a number of distinct and independent reasons. In particular, the interviews made reference to certain events which could not have been known to the interviewer. They tallied with

information from independent, confidential sources, which was not available to him. They outlined the contents of Mr. Prior's Bill six months before he even came into his present office. Above all, they supplied the intelligible key to a course of events which over the years have baffled those outside government who participated in them. The hypothesis of fiction or forgery is simply not visible.

The interest and importance of the material is not confined to Northern Ireland. It is a matter for national concern if one or more departments of State are conducting the international policy of this country behind the backs of the responsible Ministers and the Cabinet, or alternatively if responsible Ministers are concealing from Parliament and the public the true nature of the policies on which they are engaged. The parallelism and relevance of the investigation now being carried out into events leading up to the invasion of the Falkland Islands is too obvious to need pointing out.

One would have felt entitled to assume that, as responsible for the Civil Service, the Prime Minister would have insisted upon getting at the truth of a matter brought to attention in the way I have described. Indeed, the head of the Civil Service, Sir Robert Armstrong, was instructed to make such an enquiry on her behalf. One would also have assumed that unless the Secretary of State was himself aware of, and party to, the implications of the interview given by one of his departmental civil servants, implications flatly contradictory to his statements and assurances in the House of Commons, he would not have rested until he had extracted a full disclosure.

As it is, an informal talk with Mr. Abbott's interviewer by a comparatively junior official and a bland disclaimer issued by Mr. Prior in a parliamentary written answer on the eve of the

Recess, dutifully but obscurely printed by some of the newspapers, is the sum total of what happened. No confrontation, no cross-examination, no interrogation of other officials, no acceptance of the offer made by Mr. Molyneux and myself to place ourselves at Sir Robert Armstrong's disposal.

When government is so uninquisitive, the duty of inquisition might be thought, in a free society, to devolve upon the Press. These are matters, it might be thought, about which the public are entitled to know and to expect that the relentless curiosity of the Press, which so often pursues the private affairs and personal griefs of humble folk in order to drag into the light truth however distasteful or unswoury, will be put at their service, in order to prevent government from successfully taking refuge behind a screen of nonchalant 'know nothing'. It is little wonder if the unworthy suspicion is sometimes entertained that when the firedoors close in the corridors of power, the newspaper world is liable to take the hint and leave unturned the stones which hide embarrassment for the purveyors of patronage and the holders of authority.