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SPL(72) 2nd Meeting

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CABINET

INTERDEPARTMENTAL GROUP UNDER CHAIRMANSHIP OF
MR J H WADDELL

MINUTES of a Meeting held in
Room 208, Home Office on
MONDAY 23 OCTOBER 1972 at 3.15 pm

PRESENT

Mr J H Waddell
Home Office (In the Chair)

Mr G F N Reddaway
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr W K Fraser
Scottish Office

Mr T C Barker
Foreign and Commonwealth Office

Mr D B Smith
Department of Employment

Mr M B Hanley
Security Service

Mr J L Jones
Security Service

Deputy Assistant Commissioner
V S Gilbert
Special Branch, Scotland Yard

Mr J M Moss
Cabinet Office

THE FOLLOWING WERE ALSO PRESENT

Mr K N Atkinson
Department of Employment

Security Service

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Mr M E Herman
Mr D H J Hilary

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1. CLAIMANTS AND UNEMPLOYED WORKERS UNIONS

The Group had before it SPL(72) 3 (Draft), an assessment of the importance of the Claimants and Unemployed Workers Unions and the extent of subversive involvement in them.

The following main points were made in discussion -

- a. The role of Strike Claimants Unions, in some ways a new expression of industrial militancy, should be more clearly differentiated from those Claimants Unions whose existence was not linked to particular strikes.
- b. The hostility of the Claimants Unions was directed specifically against the Department of Health and Social Security but was essentially a manifestation of a more general anti-establishment attitude; there was also some evidence of Claimants Unions members being involved in incitement to strike.
- c. The paper could be re-ordered to cover the history of the movement and the circumstances bringing it into being; its aims, organisation and methods; and the extent to which subversive elements influenced its activities.
- d. It would be helpful to have an indication of the scale and success of the movement's activities, and of the amount of support its demonstrations had attracted.

THE CHAIRMAN, summing up, said that the paper was a useful contribution on a topic that was likely to be of considerable Ministerial interest, particularly in the event of major industrial disputes. Its form should be revised in accordance with the discussion, especially to indicate the extent of the influence of subversive elements, and to bring out some conclusions, however tentative. He would himself discuss the re-draft with the Department of Health and Social Security.

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The Group -

1. Took note, with approval, of the Chairman's summing up.
2. Invited the Security Service to revise the paper in accordance with the Chairman's summing up.
3. Instructed the Secretaries to circulate the revised version for clearance out of Committee.

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2. CURRENT REPORTING AND LONGER TERM STUDIES

The Group considered SPL(72)(SEC) 2, a note on proposed longer term studies, and SPL(72)(SEC) 3, a note on methods of handling current intelligence.

In discussion of the Group's role in current and longer term assessments, the following main points were made -

- a. During industrial disputes, and related periods of intensive negotiation, the Security Service provided a rapid service of information on subversive influences and their relation to other aspects of a dispute. The Department of Employment drew upon these reports, together with other information available to it, in its dealings with Ministerial and Official Committees and others concerned. Daily or even weekly assessments by the Group would duplicate work being done elsewhere and would not add significantly to the knowledge available from other sources.
- b. The Group's role in relation to individual disputes might best be seen as the production of medium term "framework" papers, setting down likely subversive influences and other factors relevant to those disputes which could be predicted in advance. It might also be useful on occasions to produce brief ad hoc reports of subversive influences in disputes after they had been concluded.
- c. The most useful preparation which the Group might undertake was, however, the thorough study of key Unions to establish how decisions were taken at various levels, where power lay, and the extent to which subversive forces had influence or control.
- d. The Department of Employment was establishing a new unit to collect and assemble overt information about Trades Unions, and this information might profitably be collated with that available to the Security Service.

In the subsequent discussion of topics for assessment the following points were made -

e. In addition to the longer studies already proposed there was a requirement for a paper on the New Left, studying its subversive elements as a whole rather than in connection with particular disputes or causes. The paper should examine, at least in part, the Movement's international connections.

f. A study of subversion in the media would be valuable but posed considerable problems. IRD had produced some studies on this subject, and the Security Service had previously reported such information as was available; but a thorough assessment would involve a substantial investment of collection and analytic effort.

THE CHAIRMAN, summing up the discussion, said that it appeared that the Group's most useful contribution would be in medium and long-term assessments on the lines indicated in paragraph 10 of the paper under consideration, rather than current intelligence. The Group's Assessors should begin work on a detailed study of the National Union of Mine-workers, to be completed by the end of the year; work should also be put in hand on a similar study in depth of the Amalgamated Union of Engineering Workers. The Assessors should be prepared to produce, when necessary, short "framework" papers on subversive influences which might be involved in major disputes later this year or early next year in Fords and the Railways. In addition, the Security Service should begin work on a study of the New Left, including its international links, as a long-term project. The Security Service should not at this stage devote special effort to the production of assessments for the Group on the Schools' Action Union and National Union of School Students, but should be prepared to produce papers should the activities of these bodies become more prominent. It

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would be premature to commission a study of subversion in the media, but it would be helpful if the Director General of the Security Service could give preliminary thought to the problems involved.

The Group -

1. Noted with approval the Chairman's summing up.
2. Instructed the Group's Assessors to proceed as in the Chairman's summing up.
3. Invited the Security Service to proceed as in the Chairman's summing up.
4. Invited the Director General of the Security Service to consider the problems involved in the production by the Group of an assessment on subversion in the mass media.

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3. TRIPARTITE TALKS ON THE ECONOMY: TRADE UNIONS REACTIONS
TO GOVERNMENT PROPOSALS

The Group had before it SPL(72) 2, a paper by the Department of Employment on this subject.

THE CHAIRMAN, summing up a short discussion, said that the contents of the paper were of interest in showing how information was currently presented; and in demonstrating the need for speedy compilation and presentation. It would not now be appropriate to up-date the paper and issue it as an assessment from the Group.

The Group -

Took note, with approval, of the Chairman's summing up.

4. FUTURE REQUIREMENTS OF MINISTERS: POTENTIAL DISPUTES
IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

THE CHAIRMAN informed the Group that its initial report (Impact of Subversive Groups on Trade Union Activities SPL(72) 1 (Final)) had been submitted to the Prime Minister who had now authorised its distribution to appropriate Ministers. It was likely that the report (and the scope of the Group's future work) would be discussed by Ministers in the fairly near future. The Group's programme of work would need to be reviewed in due course in the light of this Ministerial discussion.

The Group -

Took note of the Chairman's statement.

Continuing, the Chairman said that it was possible that for this discussion Ministers would wish to be brought up to date on the potential disputes in the public sector referred to in the Group's first report. A paper (SPL(72)(SEC) 4) had therefore been prepared by the Group's assessment officers covering the potential disputes with the Local Authority Manual Workers and the Electricity Supply Manuals (Power Workers).

In Discussion of this paper the following main points were made -

- a. The cut off date for information and assessment should be clearly indicated.
- b. The possible unwillingness of supervisory grades to assist in maintaining services in the event of a dispute, was a development of some significance.

The Chairman, summing up, said that the report illustrated the difficulties of producing a short-term assessment which was not liable to be overtaken by events. Nevertheless, the report, amended in

accordance with points made in discussion, should be produced for Ministerial distribution if required. In sending it to the Secretary of the Cabinet he would draw attention to these limitations.

The Group -

1. Took note, with approval, of the Chairman's summing up.
2. Instructed the Group's Assessors to amend the report in accordance with the Chairman's summing up and to provide a revised draft for the Chairman to send to the Secretary of the Cabinet.
3. Instructed the Secretaries to circulate the revised draft in due course.

Cabinet Office

25 October 1972