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Mr Buxton

PROSCRIPTION OF THE UDA

You spoke to the Secretary of State yesterday about the position of the UDA and its possible proscription in the light of the recent discovery of arms and ammunition at its headquarters.

You outlined some of the considerations which would bear on any decision about proscription. The UDA was not now engaged in violence, although it might be ready to resort to or encourage violence in extreme situations. You noted the way in which the UDA reflected certain strands of the thinking of the Protestant community and how substantial a step it would be to proscribe it. You also pointed to some of the practical implications, and in particular the risk that proscription might not be followed, at least in the short term, by action of the kind that people would expect. It might not therefore have the impact on attitudes which had been sought.

The Secretary of State expressed his concern that the Government and the Police should be seen to be even handed. The UDA was in his view perceived by many to be a sinister organisation ready to resort to violence even if not doing so at present. Some of its leaders had been seen to move near to inciting violence. He noted that the Police had not made any arrests following the discovery of arms and had not, for example, sought extensions of detention under the Prevention of Terrorism Act whilst pursuing their enquiries. He was afraid that the Police in these circumstances would not be seen to have acted as they might have been expected to act had a similar discovery been made elsewhere than at the UDA Headquarters. He had said on the BBC on