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C. (62) 176COPY NO. 452nd November, 1962

CABINET

APPOINTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMSNote by the Acting Secretary of the Cabinet

On 1st November the Cabinet discussed the two Questions addressed to the Prime Minister standing in the name of Mr. Charles Fannell, M.P., about the appointment of the Serjeant at Arms (C.C. (62) 65th Conclusions, Minute 1).

Later the same day the Prime Minister, together with the First Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, discussed this matter with The Queen's Private Secretary. I annex for the information of the Cabinet a note of this discussion.

(Sgd.) A.L.M. CARY

Cabinet Office, S.W.1.

2nd November, 1962.

APPOINTMENT OF THE SERJEANT AT ARMS

The Prime Minister, together with the First Secretary of State and the Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster, discussed this question with Sir Michael Adeane, The Queen's Private Secretary, after the meeting of the Cabinet on Thursday, 1st November. It was confirmed that as a matter of long-standing tradition The Queen had appointed the Serjeant at Arms under the prerogative and without formal advice. The Palace of Westminster was a royal palace and the Serjeant at Arms was appointed by The Queen, as for other royal palaces, to maintain good order; in the particular case of the Palace of Westminster his services were in this capacity lent to Mr. Speaker, but this in no way affected his position as a member of the Household.

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While this was the formal position, in practice The Queen's Private Secretary consulted Mr. Speaker on an informal basis before any new appointment was made; in the present case Sir Michael Adeane had written to Mr. Speaker earlier in the year about the general requirements for a successor to the late General Hughes - who had already made known his wish to retire - and had subsequently exchanged letters with Mr. Speaker about the suitability of the present incumbent. There was also a recent precedent, and another in the time of Disraeli, for conveying to The Queen the feelings of the House about the claims of a particular individual. In these two cases The Queen had exercised the prerogative in accordance with the wishes expressed.

After a short discussion it was agreed that the Prime Minister's reply to Mr. Charles Fannell should rehearse the traditional and historical background to the appointment, should refer openly to the fact that there had on this occasion been informal consultation with Mr. Speaker, but should add that if it were the general wish of the House the Prime Minister would be ready to consult with Her Majesty to see whether she would be graciously pleased to consider some method whereby on future occasions the feeling of the House could be conveyed to her in some more formal way before she exercised the prerogative.

The Prime Minister said that he would circulate the draft of a statement on these lines to those concerned and would also discuss it with Mr. Speaker during the course of the evening. The stage would then be set, if the House so agreed, for further discussion of the precise method of consultation which it might be appropriate to adopt; there would be advantage in associating the Leader of the Opposition with these discussions.

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