

inadequately fulfilled under the present scheme. The service to detainees is delayed, inevitably, by the inability of solicitors in private practice to attend at the Holding Centre promptly. You will readily appreciate that there is a hidden - I suspect, not undetectable - motive for the proposal. One of the greatest sources of irritation, not to say friction between the RUC and solicitors in Northern Ireland who currently service detainees - which is reflected in the activities of pressure groups, such as Amnesty, CAJ, US Lawyers' Committee for Human Rights and the British Irish Rights Watch - relates to the operation of section 45, not least to deferral provisions in sub-section (8). I have pondered long and hard as to how that long-running battle could be resolved. The persistent call for some independent investigation of the allegations and counter-allegations is increasingly difficult to avoid, even though the lawyers are unwilling to give any particulars and the RUC are not desirous of pursuing their claims of unprofessional conduct by some of the solicitors. The case of Patrick Finucane also remains a rumbling complaint among civil libertarians. Whatever the rights and wrongs of the past conflict - and, I may say, they linger on in an attenuated form - at least my proposal will put an end to the foundation for any future allegations.

I have already set in train a series of meetings with members of the legal profession to try and persuade them of the soundness of my proposal. I am meeting the President and some members of the Law Society for N.I. on 7 February.