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FROM: N P PERRY
SECURITY POLICY AND OPERATIONS DIVISION
14 MAY 1997

UNDER
SEC 274/S.
15 MAY 1997
CENT SEC 443/97

ASST 08 263/S
SEC 19 MAY 1997
CENT SEC

- cc: PS/Mr Murphy (B&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir David Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Wood - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Smyth - B
- Mr Hill - B
- Mr Beeton - B
- Mr Brooker - B
- Mr Priestly - B
- Mr Clarke - B
- Mr Margetts - B
- Mr Warner - B
- Supt Maxwell - B
- Lt Col Moody - B

ASST DC 246/S
SEC 16 MAY 1997
CENT SEC

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Mr McAuley has another copy.
Mr Jones
LD 19/5

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1. MR STEELE [I strongly recommend the approach outlined by Mr Perry, which was agreed at the Parades Co-ordinating Group which I chair. In the end events on the ground will be all important. But this submission recommends a sensible and balanced Ministerial approach to what is still a very dangerous situation. JMS 14/5]
2. PS/MR INGRAM (B&L)
3. PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) - B

PARADES: 'ROUTE MAP'

At its meeting on 12 May, SPM endorsed the SCM paper '1997 Marching Season - HMG/Security Force Objectives'. One of the paper's recommendations was that an appropriate information strategy should be drawn up, agreed between the RUC, Army and NIO: work on this is in hand. The Secretary of State also asked, following her meeting with the Chief Constable on 4 May, for a 'route map' leading up to the July marches, identifying when and in what form involvement by the Secretary of State might be appropriate. This submission provides advice on this aspect: if Ministers are content with the

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overall approach proposed, this will be reflected in the finalised information strategy paper.

Overall approach

2. The parades strategy paper identified various ways in which Ministers might influence this year's marching season:

- At the strategic level, Ministers have a key role in setting the overall tone for the summer, and providing reassurance that the authorities are in control and have a vision of the way ahead. Central to this is effective presentation of HMG's decisions on North.
- In the short term, Ministers can reinforce middle ground opinion by making clear - without over-emphasising the point to the extent to which it becomes counter-productive - their support for compromise and local accommodation, their full backing for the RUC, and their determination to see law and order upheld and public safety maintained. This can be done both in face to face discussions with individuals or groups and, through the media, direct to a wider audience (in Northern Ireland and beyond).
- Operationally, the Secretary of State might at some point in the summer be invited by the Chief Constable, on the basis of detailed and timely advice, to consider exercising her powers under the public order legislation.

The strategy paper also noted the extent to which political, presentational and operational (including negotiating) considerations were interlinked, underscoring the need for very close co-ordination between the NIO, RUC and Army.

3. The discussion at SPM earlier this week illustrated how this overall approach has operated to date. The Chief Constable reported

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a number of positive signs: the fact that the Dromore compromise appears to have held; the readiness of Protestant church leaders to intervene, illustrated by Archbishop Eames' statement to the Synod the week; and the continuing positive leadership shown by Robert Saulters, and Alistair Simpson and Sir James Molyneaux. Mr Flanagan also noted the success of the RUC in dealing with a number of potentially difficult marches on the Ormeau Road, in Lurgan, Bellaghy and elsewhere. He pointed out, however, that despite these encouraging developments there had been little movement on the most difficult situations, particularly Drumcree and the Twelfth parade on the Ormeau Road, and that much work still needed to be done.

Ministerial Involvement

4. Opportunities for Ministerial involvement in the parades issue over the next few weeks can be grouped under three headings: presentational (in terms of announcements/briefings); meetings with interested groups; and direct operational involvement under the public order legislation.

Presentational

5. There are a number of opportunities over the next weeks for Ministers to set out publicly their position on parades, and to seize the presentational initiative:

- (a) Implementation of North. The decision to implement North in full is a key element in the Government's longer-term strategy for resolving the parades issue. HMG's intentions are being made public during the Queen's Speech today: the supporting announcement containing additional details of HMG's plans, including how the Parades Commission will operate during the rest of this summer, provides a valuable opportunity to set out HMG's view of the future in a positive yet sensitive manner. The key-balanced message is that HMG will be fulfilling its commitment to implement North, but it will be doing so even-handedly and with sensitivity to the concerns of the Loyal Orders.

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- (b) Wider Government Policy. HMG's overall approach to Northern Ireland issues, and how its strategy for resolving the parades issue fits into that wider context, will be spelled out in an important speech, and a supporting article, over the next few days. This can be built on in the coming weeks.
- (c) Briefings/Interviews. Ministers will be giving a wide range of briefings and interviews to the media over the next few weeks. All provide an opportunity to spell out HMG's approach to the parades issue to a variety of audiences.

6. The sense of positive action and momentum engendered by Ministerial statements will, of course, be reinforced by the actions of the Parades Commission itself, which is continuing to build up its network of contacts and to take soundings on parades across a wide spectrum of opinion. It also has work in hand on drawing up guidelines on the application of the statutory criteria, devising its own procedures for taking evidence etc, and developing codes of practice covering the conduct of marchers and protesters.

Meetings

7. The Secretary of State and other Ministers are already engaged in a wide-ranging series of meetings with political representatives and other community and Church leaders, all of which provide opportunities to explain in general terms HMG's approach to the parades issue and to encourage support for compromise and local accommodation. There are, in addition, specific requests for meetings with the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland and residents groups on the Ormeau Road, on Garvaghy Road, and at Dunloy. (Other such requests can also be expected: I understand from PAB that Messrs Bingham and Watson of the Co Armagh lodge have now also asked for an early meeting.) As discussed at SPM, the Secretary of State, supported by Mr Ingram, will wish to meet these different groups as soon after the Queen's Speech debates as diaries allow: on balance,

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it seems best that the meetings with the marching orders should precede those with the residents groups, given the likely need for greater reassurance in that quarter after the North announcement. The objective will be to listen to the views of the various representatives, and to encourage local dialogue and accommodation; it will not be appropriate for Ministers to become involved in direct negotiation at this stage. There is a good case for the Secretary of State meeting the leaders of the Apprentice Boys and the Black Institution jointly with the Orange Order, to encourage a commonality of approach: if a formal meeting on these lines cannot be arranged in the near future, an early informal meeting (eg over lunch) with Messrs Saulters, Molyneaux and Simpson would be an option worth considering. Advice on the individual requests for meetings will come forward shortly.

8. Ministers were clear at SPM that these meetings should focus on general issues, and should not cut across the efforts of the police, the Commission and other intermediaries currently engaged in negotiations or attempts at mediation. They were keen also that unrealistic expectations should not be created amongst the marching orders and residents' groups that Ministerial involvement and direct access to the Secretary of State is now the norm. While the meetings will provide an opportunity for the Secretary of State to encourage all concerned to become engaged constructively in attempts to achieve compromise, therefore, she may wish also to stress that these negotiations should now be taken forward at local level, and to suggest that Mr Ingram might act as the Ministerial level contact with the various groupings in the run-up to July/August.

Operational Decisions

9. Operationally, as the Chief Constable mentioned at SPM, there may come a stage where he feels it necessary to invite the Secretary of State to exercise her powers under Article 5 of the Public Order (NI) Order. (Mr Webb's note of 9 May sets out the legal background to the use of these powers.) As the Secretary of State made clear, it will be essential, given the significant political implications

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of such an intervention (including the damage that any subsequent reversal of a Ministerial decision would cause), that any request is based on detailed briefing and close prior co-operation and consultation between the NIO and the security forces, and against the background of a clear understanding within Government of the operational options, including the likely nature and extent of military involvement. The co-ordination and briefing arrangements discussed at SPM are now being taken forward as a matter of urgency: SPM will, however, remain the main decision-making and co-ordinating group at the higher level.

10. SPM also noted that there could be a role for direct Ministerial involvement in negotiations in the run up to particular parades if compromise had not been reached. This too would have political ramifications, however, and the pros and cons of such involvement would require careful consideration in the light of the particular circumstances of each parade.

Recommendations

11. The next few weeks will provide a number of opportunities for Ministers to become involved, at various levels, in the parades issue: advice on individual cases will come forward as appropriate. The Secretary of State is, however, invited to endorse the overall approach set out in this submission, and in particular to:

- (a) note that an information strategy on parades is being prepared and will be submitted separately;
- (b) note that the announcement of the decision to implement North in full, other forthcoming speeches/articles over the next few days, and other media occasions over the coming weeks provide the opportunity to set out HMG's overall approach to the parades issue to a range of different audiences;

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- (c) agree to meet representatives of the marching orders and residents groups in the near future to hear their views and explain HMG's position without getting involved in negotiations: and to use meetings with other political representatives and community leaders to do likewise.

- (d) note that the Chief Constable might at some stage invite the Secretary of State to use her powers under the Order in particular circumstances, but that this would happen only on the basis of close prior co-operation and consultation between the NIO and the security forces.

[signed]

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