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INTERVIEW WITH DAVID McNARRY - BBC RADIO 4 'TODAY' PROGRAMME - 8.7.98



INTERVIEWER

On the line now is David McNarry, a member of the Strategy Committee dealing with the parades issues for the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland. If you were at that meeting today with Tony Blair, what would you be telling him?

DAVID McNARRY

Well, I'd be telling him give freedom to the Orangemen and to declare open the Queen's highway on the Garvaghy Road and to stop it, Prime Minister, from becoming a 'no go' area.

INTERVIEWER

But you know that he's going to say we can't do that. He's already made that perfectly clear. So what happens now and what does Ian Paisley mean when he talks about next Monday being "sorting day" of course it's July 12th at the weekend?

DAVID McNARRY

Well, I can't speak for Ian Paisley but it's fair to say the Orangemen are ordinary people. We don't have guns, we've no bombs, we're not on the decommissioning agenda. We're skilled, we're unskilled, we're farmers, lawyers, doctors, business people, civil servants, we're just part of the community and we're together. We're together in the unity of purpose. I was at Drumcree last night. It was the largest turnout yet from just two counties that were asked to come along and there was again a significant repeat of the sign of the determination that's there. There were 12,000 men showing solidarity with the plight of the Portadown Brethren who are incarcerated in a ring of barbed wire.

INTERVIEWER

Well, they're not incarcerated are they? They've got loads of places they can go to. They just wanted to walk down a particular road that a legally established

commissioner said they can't walk down. So to talk about them being incarcerated is nonsense isn't it.

DAVID McNARRY

If you can't go the way that you want to you are incarcerated.

INTERVIEWER

Well I can't walk into Buckingham Palace, it doesn't mean I'm incarcerated does it? You know, there are places that you can't go down for perfectly good reasons and many people believe it's perfectly sensible that you shouldn't be allowed to go down the Garvaghy Road.

DAVID McNARRY

I don't know how friendly you are with Her Majesty the Queen, not many people want to go to Buckingham Palace on a traditional time and I mean I don't think there's a tradition of that and I don't think you should be flippant about it.

INTERVIEWER

Well, the talk about being incarcerated is you being flippant, surely, I mean nobody is incarcerated. They can leave if they wish. They want to walk down a particular road and the danger is that if you're being a reasonable man, you must see this surely, that at the weekend there is a serious danger because many, many thousands of people will congregate there. There is a danger of real trouble. I mean one of your colleagues warned Tony Blair last night of a complete confrontation over the parade. Well what does that mean?

DAVID McNARRY

Listen, if the delegation, I mean the delegation owes it to the country to try one last time to see if the Prime Minister has grasped the seriousness of this crisis looming in front of him.

INTERVIEWER

Or else what?

DAVID McNARRY

Well, if these men come home with our Prime Minister unable to reject the foolishness of Mo Mowlam and the Parades Commission, then regrettably I've got to say the Prime Minister must await the consequences of his action.

INTERVIEWER

Well, what does that mean?

DAVID McNARRY

Well, our Orange protests and the Orange desires are to protest peacefully, to make a peaceful protest, to break this deadlock.

Interviewer

well, it doesn't sound like it when you talk about the consequences of his action. Are you suggesting that there might be violence at the weekend?

DAVID McNARRY

If our tolerance and the ***** which is being tested to the limits now by this deadlock at Drumcree, if that tolerance and the manner in which we are approaching this matter is getting nowhere, if Her Majesty's Government is quite prepared to say those people who are suffering at Drumcree, who are staying out overnight, who are there because they firmly believe in their civil and religious liberties, if they are to be treated so scantily, then I've got to say that we can, if we wish, tweak our minds to paralyse this country in a matter of hours.

INTERVIEWER

Civil disobedience?

DAVID McNARRY

Well, our country has, let me say, the Protestant Unionist Orange section of this country which is the majority, we have set by and watched our country be raped by violence for 30 years which started with civil disobedience and, as I said, we don't have guns, we've no bombs and we have watched our problems spiral on to your part of the United Kingdom and we've seen the response and what we've seen is that violence does pay Mr Humphries. We've seen concession after concession to Sinn Fein/IRA and now we see the cells of Sinn Fein/IRA, which Gerry Adams set up some years which are called residents groups, we now see them holding the country to ransom. Now I tell you we still live in a democracy, we still respect that democracy and we would hope that the Prime Minister would also respect our position.