



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/47/83

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland.
May only be reproduced with
the written permission of the
Director of the National
Archives.

Drumcree Faith and Justice Group
211 Churchill Park
Portadown BT62 1EU
Tel: (0762) 334522/330366; Fax 338334

1 July 1993

Mr Dick Spring,
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Dublin 2.

FAX: 475-4505 No of pages: 2 (including this page).

Dear Mr Spring,

Over the past seven years the people of the predominantly Catholic Garvaghy Rd area in Portadown have joined in peaceful protests during Orange parades through the area.

These protests were designed to

- witness to the way Catholics and Protestants can and should get on with each other;

- raise questions for the RUC about their policy in relation to parades: why is that they put Orange parades through the nationalist end of Portadown, while at the same time they ban nationalists from marching in the town centre?

- point out to Orangemen that by holding these parades they are damaging community relations in the town.

We would be grateful if you would let us know as soon as possible the answers to the following questions:

a) on what grounds the RUC permits Orange parades through nationalist areas of Portadown while refusing nationalists permission to parade in the town centre?

b) is your Government satisfied that the RUC are fulfilling the commitment of the British Government under Article 7c of the Anglo-Irish Agreement to respond to the need for "a programme of special measures in Northern Ireland to improve relations between the security forces and the community, with the object in particular of making the security forces more readily accepted by the nationalist community", while at the same time operating a blatantly biased policy in relation to parades?

c) how many of the parades held in the town centre between 1 May and 30 November during the past four years were from Unionist groups and how many were from Nationalist groups.

Over the past few years we have repeatedly asked the RUC to let us have the information requested in item c). So far they have failed to provide this information.

Minister for Foreign Affairs/ 1 July 1993/ re: Orange marches

We would be grateful if you would raise these issues immediately with the British Government and let us know immediately if in the light of the above arguments they intend to re-route the Orange parade away from nationalist estates on the Garvaghy Road next Sunday.

Further, given that the purpose of the early morning parade on 12 July is for lodges from Corcraic to march to the railway station (although an alternative to Garvaghy Road is available to them) and given that the Twelfth is being held in Portadown this year, which means there can be no possible argument for such a march this year we presume that the RUC will not be allowing any march on Garvaghy Road on the 12th or at any other time. We would be grateful if you would confirm this with the British.

We note that at meetings with the RUC last year we were assured that:

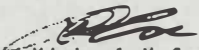
- a) no controversial bands would be allowed to walk with the parades;
- b) no supporters would be allowed walk with the parade;
- c) no crowds would be allowed to block the road at Woodside to meet the march.

All three of these undertakings were broken.

The Drumcree Faith and Justice Group remain committed to respect for different traditions and are totally opposed to the use of violence. However, with regret we are forced to conclude that the RUC are not interested in accepting their responsibility under the Anglo-Irish Agreement on this issue; further that if the RUC were to eventually respond to this issue it would be in the light of further violence surrounding it, and that is something that we have done everything in our power to avoid.

This issue is one that is being decided by might, not by right.

Yours sincerely,


Michael McCooe,
Secretary.