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Meeting with Gordon Gray, Presbyterian Minister, Lisburn,  
8 December 1993

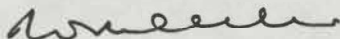
Gordon Gray is Rector of First Lisburn Presbyterian Church. He is a liberal Unionist, by his own admission would be to the left of much of his flock and is essentially ecumenical in outlook. (He has come under criticism in the past from Dr. Paisley, among others, for his attitudes). His Church covers a largely middle class section of Lisburn. He has recently been appointed a Chaplain to the British Army's Thiepval Barracks. I last met him in July, at which time we discussed Loyalist paramilitaries and attitudes in the local Unionist community. At our meeting yesterday, 8 December, the following points of interest arose:

Views in the Unionist community

- He detects no single strand of opinion within the Unionist community in response to recent events ( the peace process, Hume/Adams, revelation of British contacts with the IRA).
- A unifying element, however, is the strong sense of indignation within the Unionist community that they were lied to by the British Government in relation to denials of talks with the IRA. At a function he had attended the evening before we met, he was struck by the vehemence on this point by normally quiet and highly respectable members of the Unionist community in Lisburn.
- There is significant Unionist concern over the sense of mystery perceived in Hume/Adams and the British/IRA contacts, which the publication of the exchanges between the British and the Republican Movement has done little to allay. This concern extends to the content of the discussions between the Irish and British Governments on

bringing an end to the violence. Dr. Gray's perception is that a clear statement of what is being discussed and what is envisaged would do much to assuage Unionist fears. He invoked, as have other contacts in the Unionist community, grass roots Unionist suspicions of political and diplomatic language which tends to be seen as ambiguous and laden with hidden meanings.

- He sees an acceptance in the middle class Unionist community that there is a need to rebalance matters in the direction of the nationalist community. On the other hand, he hears from his community fears, often deeply rooted but not supported by any factual arguments, of the perceived aim of the nationalist tradition in Ireland to exercise hegemony over the Protestant community. All of this, he believes, argues strongly for the two Governments to take the Unionist community into their confidence in a manifestly unambiguous way.



Declan Kelleher  
9 December, 1993

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