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See 6 Ld Virginia Cavendish AH Cor Mr Brown for Mr McLoe Box

Secure Fax: 19

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To: HQ
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From: Belfast
From: B. Nolan

PA Parades 97 (Boycotts) Marie, perhaps a new file might be in order? DOB 12-2

The Boycott Issue - Radio discussion 12 January 1997

1. The boycott issue had an airing on "Sunday Sequence" (BBC Radio NI) on 12 January. It was a rather depressing affair. This particular programme usually manages to treat difficult issues in a positive and helpful way. But on this occasion, the overall result was (I'm sure) to leave listeners with the feeling that community relations have little future in Northern Ireland. The structure of the programme contributed greatly to the dismal effect. Introductory 'front-line' reports from Pomeroy, Strabane and Dungannon brought out the stark tribal nature of this issue and this set an unfortunate tone at the start which the programme never recovered from.

2 Those interviewed at the top of the programme included Fr. Quinn of Pomeroy, Sean Begley, a Sinn Féin Councillor in Pomeroy, Joel Patton of Drumcree fame and Clifford Smith, whose latest tract on the evils of the Roman Church is shortly to be published. Fr Quinn's remarks have already drawn some media attention and will, I imagine, be subjected to further scrutiny and criticism in the days ahead. See article in Irish News, Monday, 13Jan., forwarded separately along with usual press cuttings.

A statement issued by the Catholic Press Office in Dublin on the issue of the boycotts was read out on the programme after Fr.Quinn had spoken. Apparently the programme makers had contacted the Catholic Press Office presumably to check if Fr.Quinn's views were in order. The statement attempted to put the record straight, but the damage was already done. Clifford Smith's bizarre view that the boycott of Protestant businesses is foretold in the Book of Revelations cannot simply be dismissed as the views of a crank. Joel Patton, who said his nursery business in Dungannon has been hit by the boycott, indicated that many Protestants would broadly share Smith's belief that there is a plot to rid Ireland of Protestantism and that Drumcree and its aftermath proves this.

3. In the subsequent studio discussion, Archbishop Eames, Denis Haughey, Rev Ivor Smith (Presbyterian Minister from Cookstown) and Duncan Morrow, a University of Ulster lecturer tried to dispel some of the gloom engendered by the reportage in the earlier part of the programme. They could not, however, avoid noting that boycotts are taking place, that they are having a disturbing, destructive effect and that in many instances, they mostly affect those who are in an already difficult (minority) situation.

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Overall (the panel agreed), their real significance lies in the fact that they are symptoms of a much deeper and worrying malaise underlying Northern society.

4. There was much reference to the well established place Capt. Boycott's legacy has in Irish history and the need for "proper, sensitive treatment" of this issue by the media. The Archbishop did his best to focus attention on the local, inter-personal and community dimensions and play up the role which contacts and cross-community efforts can and must make if we are not to see community relations deteriorate even further this year. He was asked by the chair if he had anything to say about the prospects for Drumcree 1997. All he wished to say at this stage is that everything possible is being done to avoid a repetition but that it would be unfair to those involved to say anything further at this time.

5. Towards the end of the programme Archbishop Eames and Denis Haughey emphasised the role of politics in the search for a solution. The Archbishop admitted that "basic sectarian attitudes" lie at the heart of the problem in NI. This is much deeper than Drumcree and derives from insecurity about the future on both sides of the divide

> *We have somehow got to address that as Christians. The Church, the politicians and the academics have to center on that issue..... An end to the paramilitary threat is totally essential. I would appeal again to the loyalist paramilitaries : dont be sucked back into a situation, which is eventually going to take us to Doomsday. You have maintained your ceasefire as we understand it. I beg you do not fall into the trap now.(EAMES)*

> *Until we solve the fundamental problems, that is to devise an agreement, which we can both accept and live by, as to how we are governed and how we run our affairs , these kinds of problems are going to recur because they are symtomatic of a deep divide over who we are, what we are and how we run our affairs. That's the obligation which rests upon political leaders in particular, to work at it until we find an agreement.* (This involves getting) *peace in the first instance, and in the second, equally important getting all parties with a significant electoral mandate around a table, hammering out an agreement about the problems besetting us as a community. That's what we have to achieve in the next few months. (HAUGHEY)*

6. Dr. Eames has been following up on his remarks about the urgency of using the Talks process to try to move matters forward in media interviews here this Monday morning, 13 January.

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