

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/51/183
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.

PST, PSS
S/S Ó hUiginn
Counsellors A-I Section
Messrs. Teahon, Donlon & Dalton
Ambassadors London & Washington
~~Joint Secretary~~

SF615

TO: COFLOINN/EMCKEE, AI DIV., HQ

FROM: BNOLAN, BELFAST.

Subj. W/E 20-22 June 1997.

-Bellaghy, Mountfield, Keady Orange Parades
-Harryville
-Media references and remarks

1. Following receipt of a short NIO note on the Bellaghy and Mountfield Orange parades this w/e, (forwarded to you upon receipt late Friday pm), I asked to be kept informed of developments throughout the weekend. The Keady parade was not mentioned in the note referred to.

2. The parades passed off without serious incident. There was a large police presence at the three locations, in particular Bellaghy. The parades marched to police lines and, at Bellaghy, the local Orange leader, Robert Overend, citing the European Convention on Human Rights, asked that a protest against re-routing be conveyed to SOSNI.

3. You will be aware from reports that the police/ army presence was felt by locals in Bellaghy to be uncomfortably heavy. **Following a call from E.McKee at 7pm, Sunday, I contacted the other side to convey our worry that the continuing presence of 25 or so police vehicles in the village, well after the Orange had concluded their activities and departed, could provoke problems as the evening wore on. The Irish side would undoubtedly be asking some very pointed questions about the reason for continuation of such heavy policing if trouble were to break out in Bellaghy hours after the parades had concluded.**

Harryville.

4. You will have seen media reports that at Saturday evening Mass in Harryville, Canon Sean Connolly told worshippers that the 6pm Mass there is to be suspended until 6 September next The news of this announcement became known locally earlier on Saturday and may have had some bearing on the decision of the Harryville protesters to forego their usual Saturday evening 'outing' opposite the church, though the official reason given by protesters was their wish to pay respects to the two policemen shot in Lurgan on Monday. About 30 protesters presented a wreath to RUC Constable, Roger McCallum, before dispersing.

A piece in this morning's *News Letter* is headed "RUC unable to protect Mass", says the decision to suspend was prompted by an admission from RUC chiefs that they could not guarantee safety of parishioners on 12 July. You will shortly have comments by the Mayor of Ballymena, praising the decision to suspend, made on BBC radio here this morning.

©DFA/2021/51/183

Media references

5. We have forwarded to the Dept. transcripts of the following interviews. The first two cover the parades issue in some detail :

- RUC Chief Constable on "Sunday Sequence", BBC Radio.
- Ken Maginnis on SkyTV, also on Sunday morning.
- Senator Mitchell on the Frost programme, Sunday 22 June
- The interviews with Deputy BurkeTD and Bruce Morrison on Jim Dougal's "Inside Politics", Saturday 21 June.

6. David Trimble's remarks about Drumcree at the Irish Association meeting in Portadown on Friday night received some attention in Saturday's papers. The *News Letter* headlined the story *" Tread Softly Trimble Offer"*. While its difficult to know what to make of it, there was at least a public acknowledgement by Trimble of the inconvience caused to residents by the lengthy policing required : *"I understand the inconvience that would cause"*. Curiously none of the local media followed up the story in any way as far as I can see and Ken Maginnis did not refer to it in his Sunday morning TV interviews.

7. The two Northern Sunday papers usually carry an assortment of 'security' stories in decidedly tabloid style. For what they may be worth, the following should be looked at from this w/e's crop.

- several Drumcree related pieces in *Sunday World*, including an "exclusive" by Martin O'Hagan stating the Drumcree parade will be banned and detailing some of the preparations supposedly being made to deal with subsequent developments.

- a contrary piece by Alan Murray in *Sunday Life* headlined *"RUC to Sanction Drumcree Parade"*.

- Of more interest are the articles in Saturday's Belfast Telegraph concluding a series on the parades issue. **I attach copy of the full article which Colin Irwin, one of the contributers to Saturday's page, submitted to the Telegraph, but which was shortened in publication.**

©DFA/2021/51/183

Listen to the people

In the public opinion poll commissioned by the Belfast Telegraph last March the people of Northern Ireland offered two solutions to the problem of contentious parades - "The rule of law" and "A Bill of Rights". We have neither and even the Chairman of the Parades Commission has admitted that voluntary mediation and the good offices of his agency may not be able to prevent Drumcree Three. Is anyone out there, is anyone listening, is there anyway back?

In the Belfast Telegraph/Queen's Survey the different options for bringing contentious parades within the bounds of legal controls were placed before a representative sample of the adult population of Northern Ireland. A total of 932 people were asked to say which policies they **Preferred**, or found **Acceptable**, or **Tolerable** as part of a peace settlement; or completely **Unacceptable** under any circumstances. The options were as follows:

Completely reject the "North Report" - The "North" report should be rejected in full. Decisions on contentious parades should continue to be made by the police.

Modify "North Report" to give stronger right to parade - All parades "customarily held along a particular route" should be allowed to take place.

Modify "North Report" to ensure that all parades and public demonstrations are treated equally before the law - The Legal control of all marches, parades and public demonstrations should be the same for everyone and disputes should be settled as a matter of law by tribunals and courts.

Accept the "North Report" in full without delay - The "North" report should be accepted in full by everyone in Northern Ireland and introduced into law without delay.

Modify "North Report" to place stronger restrictions on parades - Residents should have a legal right to decide which parades can go through their area.

Protestant	Preferred	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
Completely reject the "North Report"	25%	11%	17%	48%
Modify "North Report" to give stronger right to parade	32%	29%	22%	17%
Modify "North Report" to ensure that all parades and public demonstrations are treated equally before the law	36%	23%	30%	11%
Accept the "North Report" in full without delay	9%	18%	22%	51%
Modify "North Report" to place stronger restrictions on parades	8%	13%	17%	63%

©DFA/2021/51/183

Catholic	Preferred	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
Completely reject the "North Report"	8%	5%	13%	74%
Modify "North Report" to give stronger right to parade	9%	13%	17%	61%
Modify "North Report" to ensure that all parades and public demonstrations are treated equally before the law	37%	37%	19%	7%
Accept the "North Report" in full without delay	25%	32%	25%	18%
Modify "North Report" to place stronger restrictions on parades	31%	36%	19%	14%

An almost equal majority of both Protestants (36%) and Catholics (37%) agreed that the North Report should be modified to ensure that all parades and public demonstrations are treated equally before the law. 46% of Alliance voters selected this option as their first choice as did 39% of UUP supporters and 37% of the SDLP electorate. 57% of Sinn Fein voters selected stronger restrictions on parades as their preferred option but only 5% of them find the equal treatment before the law option unacceptable. Similarly 40% of DUP voters chose a stronger right to parade as their preferred option but only 16% consider equal treatment before the law to be unacceptable.

Modify "North Report" to ensure that all parades and public demonstrations are treated equally before the law	Preferred	Acceptable	Tolerable	Unacceptable
DUP	20%	24%	40%	16%
UUP	39%	29%	23%	8%
Alliance	46%	33%	18%	4%
SDLP	37%	37%	18%	8%
Sinn Fein	24%	47%	23%	5%

But this broad consensus to accept the rule of law has not, as yet, been put into practice. If it had been than bad behaviour, by paraders and protesters alike, could now be the subject of legal sanctions and penalties. Riotous actions, obstruction and even a refusal to talk could all be matters of regulation and adjudication by tribunals and courts. Everyone would know where they stood and if anyone felt their rights had not been respected higher authorities would be available to hear their appeals, all the way, if necessary, to the European Court of Human Rights. But these regulations and laws are not in place. There are no judgements to be heard or challenged and the search for justice continues to be frustrated or denied.

©DFA/2021/51/183

Similarly if the people of Northern Ireland could reach agreement on a "Bill of Rights" then it is entirely possible that questions, like the right to Parade, could be settled without the necessity of making appeals to European Courts. This option was also placed before the people of the Province in the Belfast Telegraph/Queen's Survey. It received wide support from both communities.

Most of the political parties at the Stormont Talks would also like to negotiate such a "Bill of Rights" but no one seems to be able to get past decommissioning and into questions of substance. This is not what the people of Northern Ireland want. When asked if they supported the principle of a negotiated settlement for the political future of Northern Ireland 94% said "Yes". With a certain sense of realism, however, only 26% believed the current Talks would lead to such a settlement.

No new laws to deal with contentious parades, no "Bill of Rights", no meaningful talks and no political settlement in view. All we seem to have is a vacuum looking to be filled with violence. At the recent peace conference in South Africa, Nelson Mandella told the Northern Ireland politicians who attended that they, like everyone else, had to make peace with their enemies. This strategy could yet save us - at both the Stormont Talks and on the Garvaghy Road.

But it must also be remembered that those who parade and those who protest have both rights and responsibilities. This is the essence of the rule of law and it is by this principle that all those involved in the coming marching season will be judged. Before it is too late, please, listen to the people, and please, give accommodation and reconciliation one more try. Please talk.

©DFA/2021/51/183