

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Reference Code:	2021/51/560
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Drumcree - Meeting with Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition

Portadown, 30 June 1997

At a meeting with the above (which included Fr. Eamon Stack, Joe Duffy and four others; Breadán McCionnaith was at a meeting in Belfast), the following points arose:

1. The mood of the community is one of absolute determination to adhere to their approach which centres on two fundamental principles:

   - that the Orange Order should "reciprocate" for the concession in 1995 and the events of 1996 by granting a "breathing space" to the residents this year.

   - that the Order should engage in a process of engagement to establish agreement on the issue for the long term.

2. Any derogation from this would be resisted and protests mounted. On a sliding scale of best to worst options, they set out the following rank order; agreement by the Order as above as the only option which would be welcomed; a rerouting with effective policing (i.e. the Order returning by the outward leg or a properly policed standoff) which would be accepted as a necessary demonstration of the forces of law and order to withstand Orange bullying; an enforced compromise of the route (turning right on the Garvaghy toward the roundabout at the Dungannon Road) which would be resisted and protests mounted in support of nationalists living along that part of the Garvaghy Road; the worst option was the one they feared and suspected - a parade forced through by the security forces.

3. They presented an agenda which was passed to the Orange Order (annex A of attached documents which also include summary notes of the proximity talks agreed by the Residents and the Secretary of State). As can be seen, the agenda included items on an alternative route and on the possibility of a march *welcomed* down the Garvaghy by the residents after a process of engagement (the time frame was 5 years). It was, according to the Secretary of State, received in total silence by the Orange delegation. The residents emphasised that they got "nothing back from the Orange" during the proximity talks.

4. During the proximity talks, John Steele of the NIO asked whether the residents would allow a parade "for the sake of peace". Peace, they felt, should not have a price tag. In the course of our conversation today, they said that what happened now would set the pattern of coming years. If the issue was not faced now, it never would. Their comments were sprinkled with phrases like "no more croppy lie down", "we won't go back", "we've come too far". They conveyed a sense of their determination to take a stand now and stick to it until the issue was satisfactorily resolved.

5. When the Secretary of State spoke to the Orange about the alternative - turning right on

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the Garvaghy toward the roundabout at the Dungannon Road - one member of the Orange delegation said that they could not sell this, provoking heated rebuttals from his colleagues to the effect that they would not tolerate any deviation from the planned route. (The residents said that this option had been offered to the Orange Order last year by the RUC and refused). When the Secretary of State mentioned another standoff, the Orangemen said that if they did not get down the Garvaghy, there would be trouble. According to the residents' understanding, Mo Mowlam replied "Don't threaten me". She hinted that her main security worry was not a standoff at Drumcree (presumably given the saturation cover of the security forces) but elsewhere. The residents believe that she is concerned about the Orange Order escalating tensions by marching repeatedly across Northern Ireland and particularly in North Belfast and North Antrim (possibly Dunloy). They also believe that the Orange Order will leave road blocks and other forms of insurgency to the Spirit of Drumcree and loyalist paramilitaries, allowing the Order to disassociate itself from such activities and concentrate on repetitive marches in contentious areas.

6. The residents believe that the LVF and hardline loyalists generally are active in their own areas, making sure residents are displaying plenty of colour (bunting and flags) and generally building up the sense of expectation. Individual nationalists have been warned by the RUC that the LVF is carrying out surveillance. The residents believe that the LVF will not strike until after 6 July. They said they were not particularly concerned about the threat of loyalist retaliation which they said was an ever present threat in any event. It was accepted as a fact of life.

7. During the proximity talks RUC Chief Constable, Ronnie Flanagan, remained smooth and inscrutable. The general opinion among the residents' delegation was that a parade would be forced along the road - the weekend media coverage confirmed their suspicions. The Secretary of State referred to the Parades Commission and her commitment to having it in place with powers of determination next year (which the residents considered a gentle attempt at a sop). They believe that if the decision was left to the Secretary of State alone, there would not be a parade but that the weight of the NIO and the security forces was behind a quick and painless parade in the hope that it would relieve loyal pressure until the Twelfth. When the residents asked the Secretary of State when was she going to stand up to the Orange Order, Steele intervened and suggested a break in the discussion. The talks were not resumed after that point.

8. The meeting concluded with discussion of a suitable time to meet the Government over the coming days.

Eamonn McKee
Security Section
30 June 1997

PSM S

PSM, PSS, S/S Ó hUiginn, Counsellors A-I, Mr Teahon, Mr Dalton, Dr Mansergh, Ambassadors London & Washington, Joint Secretary, Section, Box

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MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS' COALITION

27 June 1997: 1200 hrs

AGREED SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

Agreed that notes passed from one delegation to the other should be signed by the originating delegation, and counter signed by the Secretary of State, for purposes of authentication. [Note: this will be put to the Orange delegation.]

Agreed that a brief summary of the main points agreed with the GRRC should be produced after each meeting, based on a summing up by the Chairman.

Agreed that it would be a common aim to conclude the business of the proximity talks on 27 June. However, if the Secretary of State believes that further discussions would be valuable, she will invite the participants to return on Saturday 28 June and they will consider if that is worthwhile.

D. Mac Cumhaill

Mairead Mhic.

EPC/2

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MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS' COALITION

27 June 1997, 1250 hours

AGREED SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. The Secretary of State asked how residents would view a parade, with conditions, down the Garvaghy Road in the interests of avoiding confrontation. The GRRC made the following points in discussion:

- Local people need a **breathing space**. The gesture of goodwill in 1995 had been abused by the Orange Order. Time was needed to build up trust, and establish new relationships and structures. They were not saying that Orange parades would never again take place down the Garvaghy Road.

- The **alternative route** along the Dungannon Road was also contentious, as there was nationalist housing on it also, but as a gesture of goodwill the residents were prepared to guarantee its use by the Order, and were willing to have that undertaking underwritten by others.

- The parades issue was a reflection of **wider tensions** in Portadown. Catholics did not feel safe in the centre of the town, fears intensified by the murder of [Robert] Hamill. Nor would nationalist parades be welcome there, though this was not a particular priority for nationalists at the moment. There was no equality of rights in relation to daily life.

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- The Orange Order had basic issues to address, and in particular its anti-Catholic and anti-Irish nationalist ethos. Even if matters such as numbers, bands, banners, etc were addressed, the Orange Order itself caused offence to Catholics.

- Policing remained a problem. Many officers were members of the Orange Order. Large scale and heavy-handed policing had been part of local residents experience for many years, and was part of the problem, and not just related to the parade.

B. Mac Cionnaith
Máirtín Mullen

HL/3

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MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS' COALITION

27 June 1997, 1430 hours

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. The Secretary of State confirmed that she was continuing to encourage the Orange Order to engage in direct dialogue with the residents, and asked for the GRRC's view of the areas which such a discussion might cover.

2. The GRRC indicated that any such dialogue should be the start of a long-term process, and be broadly based, focusing not just on the narrow parades issue, but on a wide range of equality issues - eg fair employment, law and order , parity of esteem - with participation in the discussions extending beyond the Order to include all interested parties in the Portadown area. The objective would be to create over a period of years a society where all could feel safe and equal. The Secretary of State pointed out that an agenda along these lines was effectively that of the wider Talks process, and the timescale extremely long: she wondered about the seriousness of intent behind an agenda of this nature. The GRRC noted that there was in their view a clear linkage between parades and these wider issues. A key issue for them was whether the Order's representatives were prepared to enter genuine negotiations, given the stance taken by Grand Lodge. The Secretary of State confirmed that her discussions so far today with the Order had indeed covered a range of detailed issues, including routes, conditions etc, in a very frank way.

3. The meeting was adjourned after 20 minutes, at the GRRC's request.

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MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS' COALITION

27 June 1997, 1535 hours

SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

1. At the outset of the meeting the GRRC tabled an agenda of issues which might be covered in any direct discussions with the Orange Order. This is attached at Annex A. (— same Annex A referred to in preceding note)

2. The Secretary of State explained that neither side was moving, as yet. The GRRC said that their current position was not necessarily for all time, but there was no scope, in their view, for them to create a 'breathing space' this year by agreeing to a march. Their goodwill gesture in 1995 had been thrown back in their faces, their views had been overridden in 1996, and the time had come for the Order to reciprocate. Nor could they agree now, if there was no parade this year, to one next year: the first step had to be voluntary re-routing by the Order, and for negotiations then to take place in the improved atmosphere which that would create. A gap of more than a year in parades was probably needed, to allow understanding to be built up.

3. The Secretary of State noted the serious situation facing everyone at this juncture, with community tensions high and terrorist violence underway. The GRRC recognised this, but saw no scope for manoeuvre in the light of the experience of the past two years. New estates due to be built in the area, which would be nationalist, would intensify the problem. The solution was for the parade to be confined to the Dungannon Road, and for this agreement to be underwritten by political parties, the Catholic Church and others. Ritual or token protests,

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followed by the granting of consent, were neither deliverable nor appropriate. The GRRC did not want violence, nor the involvement of outsiders, but would not give way to Orange Order threats. The Secretary of State welcomed the commitment to no violence and agreed that threats from any side were wholly unacceptable.

B. Mac Giolla Mhuire

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ANNEX A

AGENDA FOR FACE TO FACE MEETING WITH ORANGE ORDER

1. Is the Portadown District bound by GOLI instruction that parades, the routes that they take and the venues that they go to, are not negotiable? If not, can the Orange Order delegation produce a written assurance to that effect?

2. Breathing Space - the reasons why a breathing space is necessary for Nationalists in Portadown with particular reference to 1995 and 1996.

3. Alternative route.

4. Building Relationships - the items to be discussed and dealt with during the breathing space. Methods of building relationships.

5. The Future - Both sides will give an undertaking to embark upon a long-term process aimed at securing full treatment in relation to exercise of all rights for everyone in Portadown, in which every encouragement would be given to the establishment of mutual respect and understanding. We strive for the ideal whereby parades could be welcomed on the Garvaghy Road.

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MEETING WITH GARVAGHY ROAD RESIDENTS' ASSOCIATION

27 June 1997 1715 hrs

AGREED SUMMARY OF MAIN POINTS

The Secretary of State suggested it would be better to finish proximity talks that evening, issuing a statement that bilateral contacts would continue with the aim of reaching a resolution. The residents made the following points:

- They asked for confirmation, which was given, that the Orange Order had rejected their request for face to face talks.

- Asked for confirmation that their proposed agenda had been passed to the Orange Order. The Secretary of State confirmed it had, and she would be discussing it with the Order.

- The residents intended to issue a prepared statement, which was handed over.

The meeting discussed the residents' planned response to a decision. The residents made the following points:

- Observers would be invited to the proposed festival at the Garvaghy Road. But the residents had made clear they wanted no outsiders at any protest.

- The residents were committed to non-violent protest against any adverse decision.

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- Residents would challenge in court any decision to force a march down the Garvaghy Road. They needed as much time as possible to prepare a challenge.

B. Mac Cionnaith

Máirtín Mac.

EPC/10

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DRAFT PRESS RELEASE

27 June 1997

The Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Rt Hon Dr Mo Mowlam MP, held proximity discussions at Hillsborough Castle today with representatives of the Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition and the Orange Order. Following the discussions the Secretary of State said:

> "I am grateful to those who agreed to attend today. These discussions formed part of our continuing effort to find a principled and honourable resolution to the difficult problem we face in Portadown. While we have not reached a resolution today, there are a number of areas which I want to consider further. I shall do this and be in touch again with both sides early next week. We must all continue to play our part in the search for a reasonable local accommodation."

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Agenda for face to face meeting with Orange Order

1. Is the Portadown District bound by GOLI instruction that parades, the routes that they take and the venues that they go to, are not negotiable? If not, can the Orange Order delegation produce a written assurance to that effect?

2. Breathing Space - the reasons why a breathing space is necessary for Nationalists in Portadown with particular reference to 1995 and 1996;

3. Alternative route;

4. Building Relationships - the items to be discussed and dealt with during the breathing space; Methods of building relationships;

5. The Future - Both sides will give an undertaking to embark upon a long term process aimed at securing full treatment in relation to exercise of all rights for everyone in Portadown, in which every encouragement would be given to the establishment of mutual respect and understanding. We strive for the ideal whereby parades could be welcomed on the Garvaghy Road.

27/6/97

Breandán Mac Cionnaith

Eamon Stack

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Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition

Hillsborough, Friday, 27 June 1997: The Garvaghy Road Residents' Coalition attended proximity talks in good faith with the intention of seeking an agreement. With the Secretary of State, Dr. Mo Mowlam, we were willing to participate in 'an inclusive agenda'. We had useful and constructive exchanges during the course of the day with the Secretary of State. Unfortunately, the Orange Order were not willing to pursue a similar path with us directly.

The Residents' Coalition want to sit down with the Portadown Orangemen and find a lasting and just resolution to the parades dispute. This possibility has been persistently closed to us. We accepted the invitation to participate in proximity talks in Hillsborough Castle although this was far from our preferred way of proceeding.

We reaffirm our commitment to seeking a peaceful and localised resolution to the marching issue. We would hope that the Orange Order would make a similar commitment.

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