

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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17 March 1997

PST; PSS; Messrs. Teahon, Donlon & Dalton; Ambassadors London & Washington; Joint Secretary; Counsellors A-I

To: S/Secretary O hUiginn

From: B. Nolan, Belfast

1. Mr McK
2. Ms O'Brien

Re: Conversation with Noel Liggett, District Master, Ballynafeigh No. 10 Orange Lodge and Pauline Gilmore of ORDER(Ormeau Residents Demand Equal Rights)

1. I met with Noel Liggett and Pauline Gilmore at the home of Quakers Alan and Janet Quilley recently. The Quilleys had been suggesting contact with the Ballynafeigh Orange for some time and eventually they indicated to me that Noel Liggett would meet me for an informal discussion over a meal. The evening before the appointment he asked to bring along Pauline Gilmore of ORDER (Ormeau Residents Demand Equal Rights) and we agreed to this, although wondering about the reason for this last minute request.

2. Noel Liggett is a soft-spoken, hard working, dedicated Orangeman, pleasant and easy to converse with. He is presently District Master of District No.10 Lodge in Ballynafeigh . A bakery worker with difficult working hours (often a 3 am to 3 pm day), he is, nevertheless, much involved with the youth activities of the Ballynafeigh lodges. According to the Quilleys, Liggett was among the Ballynafeigh members who tried genuinely to reach agreement with the Lower Ormeau Concerned Citizens in relation to the 1995 Twelfth parade. These efforts, seemingly on the brink of success, were undone by the events at Drumcree (Mark I) and the resulting breakdown led to the stand-off which continues to the present time. Liggett's standing may have suffered

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as a result. He needs to be more careful about the issue of contacts with the LOCC and this may explain the last minute request to have Pauline Gilmore accompany him to our meeting. In the event, including Ms. Gilmore meant that, unfortunately, he had little opportunity to express his views on the matters discussed, as she did most of the talking.

3. Ms. Gilmore, although personally attractive and articulate, is not easy company. She has strong views on every issue, real and imaginary, and was in no way inhibited by the circumstances of our meeting from expressing her views forcefully and directly. For an hour or so, I was obliged to endure a torrent of criticism and abuse on behalf of 'a rogues gallery', which included not only such obvious targets as Gerard Rice, Gerry Adams and Dick Spring, but also the Pope and various TDs with whom she has clashed from time to time on radio and TV. There is a disturbing, somewhat manic side to her persona, which made initial exchanges difficult, but the process of correcting the numerous errors in her 'presentation' helped her eventually to get into a dialogue mode and, in the end, the exchanges were easier and she seemed willing to continue the conversation at another time.

4. It was fairly clear from the beginning that neither wanted to engage in any kind of open-ended discussion on the issue of parades. For Ms. Gilmore, this is a simple black and white matter : of "civil and religious liberty" on the one hand, of ever expanding Nationalist territory on the other. She complained bitterly and repeatedly about Dublin's support for Gerard Rice and accompanying lack of support for Protestant rights. Needless to say, she drew angrily on the recent meeting in Dublin with the various Residents Groups (including her particular *bete noir*, Gerard Rice) to support her accusation of one-sidedness. Fortunately, I had several Government statements on the parades issue to hand to help dispel the notion that Dublin wants to see an end to Orange parades. I stressed that Dublin is perfectly willing to listen to both sides, Orange as well as Residents Groups, should either wish to talk to us. In this context,

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we discussed briefly the recent meeting between Minister of State Avril Doyle and Rev. Brian Kennaway of the Orange Order's Education Committee regarding the Order's input to the 1798 Commemoration.

5. As indicated above, much of the discussion needed to be taken up with an effort on my part to deal with Ms.Gilmore's several outlandish notions about matters Anglo-Irish. In this, I was assisted on various points by the Quilleys, which was useful in that it created a three-way discussion rather than a two-way argument which would have been more to Ms.Gilmore's liking. It would be tedious to recount all of the points, which needed attention, but, for the record, here are a few examples :

> She refused initially to believe that the London Government had any part in the establishment of Maryfield, being more comfortable with the notion that it was some kind of unilateral Dublin invasion, aided by the Americans, with the Pope and the UN hovering vaguely and mischievously in the background.

> She claimed to have been told by "a TD" that the RUC Chief Constable is obliged to come to Maryfield from time to time to give an account of himself to those TD's who "keep on coming to the North to join in the protests."

> When Harryville was mentioned, she angrily denounced the Catholic Church for building in a Protestant area, claiming that Protestants are not allowed to build churches outside of their areas. Noel Liggett attempted to rescue her from this line of argument and draw the discussion back to the more promising one about parades. I had the impression that Liggett was unhappy with her anti-Catholic remarks, especially in the presence of the Quilleys.

6. Another matter touched upon which drew an embarrassing response from Ms. Gilmore was the question of punishment beatings. She is involved in 'community

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affairs' in the Annadale Flats area of South Belfast. She was not forthcoming about the precise nature of her involvement, but her links with loyalist groups and the UDP suggest that she is, in essence, a full-time activist on their behalf rather than a community worker, as she initially tried to portray herself. She declared herself unequivocally in favour of punishment beatings in situations where local communities have been abandoned by the police and social service agencies when confronted with drugs and child abuse problems. She referred to several examples of such situations and made clear she was not herself averse to participating in the administration of punishment in child abuse cases. The Quilleys were aghast. In the two years or so they have known her, they had not heard her express such views.

7. It was as we discussed these and other community problems that Ms. Gilmore began to listen a bit more to what I was saying in relation to Northern issues generally and the approach of the Dublin Government since the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. I did not manage to change their minds about the latter, but given their repeated assertion that "most Catholics in NI want to remain in the UK", I invited them to consider how this desirable state of affairs (from their point of view) might have come about. Could it be that the much maligned Anglo-Irish Agreement may have helped Catholics in NI to move in that direction? If that is the case, can it be said that "Dublin interference in the North" is entirely wrong and unacceptable, even from a Unionist-loyalist point of view?

Conclusions

It was clear from remarks made at the start that both Mr. Liggett and Ms. Gilmore were uncomfortable about talking to someone from the Maryfield Secretariat (Ms.Gilmore particularly) but their willingness to continue the conversation at another time shows that it was worth the effort.

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- It was disappointing, if not surprising, that they were not prepared to open up the discussion on parades to any extent. They stuck to their basic line and I, therefore, kept repeating Dublin's line on this issue, which is very different from the version of it they arrived with. Noel Liggett was equally reluctant to discuss the debate allegedly going on within the Orange Order at this time on the parades issue and on the prospects for Drumcree.

- When I stressed that Dublin is prepared, even anxious, to listen to all sides on the parades issue, the Ormeau Rd. problem as well as any other, they were quite startled and said they could not give me an immediate reply on this. They would have to consider this further.

- I hope it will be possible to continue the conversation at another time, perferably with Mr. Liggett on his own, as I doubt that further exposure to 'the perils of Pauline' will do either of us any good.

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