

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
National Archives

Reference Code:	2021/51/576
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.

cc RST, ASS, Second Secretary Counsellor AI CAD S/T

Report Number: S. 048

Transmitted on: RTE Radio 1 - Morning Ireland

Date: 05 September 1996

Time: 8am

Short Title: Intv: Billy Hutchinson, PUP

News Extracts

Ms O'Brien pa wf

Aine Lawlor:

...(Rally held in support for Billy Wright last night)...Well one man who clearly was not at that rally but who is on the line now is Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party. Billy Hutchinson, good morning to you.

Billy Hutchinson: (Progressive Unionist Party)

Good morning.

Aine Lawlor:

You clearly don't have a lot of support in that area, are you, have you made a mistake, have you miscalculated in isolating Billy Wright?

Billy Hutchinson:

Well I haven't isolated Billy Wright, Billy Wright isolated himself, and let me say that there is no difference of political opinion between me and Billy Wright except that he doesn't agree with my left wing politics and that...

Aine Lawlor:

Well that's not what we were hearing at the rally last night.

Billy Hutchinson:

Well I mean is it, well I mean like...

Aine Lawlor:

Deserting Orangemen?

NIR ISO9002 REGISTERED COMPANY

©DFA/2021/51/576

All Reports are supplied for the purposes of Research/and/or private study only

Billy Hutchinson:

Well we never ever have made a statement against Orangemen, in fact if any Orangemen, if any Orangeman wants to know our Party has been involved in trying to encourage dialogue with the Orange Order to actually get the marches down and we're on record with all that and we have never ever have done, and I could actually get Orangemen from West Belfast and North Belfast where I live, and we actually took part in trying to marshal parades to make sure things went okay, so all these allegations, you know, are bewilderment to me and what I would say is that, you know, this whole argument is not about political direction, it's about Billy Wright breaking the code of the UVF and it's an internal matter between him and the UVF. Mr. Wright was offered to go to meetings and he refused to turn up so therefore it's his problem, he has broke the code, and I have said on BBC this morning, and I have to say this to RTE you know, I am bewildered by the media because at one stage the media, who were describing Mr. Wright as King Rat and I thought very very unfairly, and they'd accused him of everything including the Titantic, that I think it was very unfair because he wasn't guilty of half the things he was being accused of, now all of a sudden have turned him into Prince Charming, I mean I just wonder what the media are actually playing at and do the media really know is this the same Billy Wright? What I would like to ask is will the real Billy Wright stand up?

Aine Lawlor:

But whatever you think of Billy Wright, surely he has the right to be at that rally, he has the right to speak out, he has the right not to be threatened by the Combined Loyalist Military Command.

Billy Hutchinson:

And I haven't disputed any of those things.

Aine Lawlor:

So would you call for the death threat against him to be withdrawn then?

©DFA/2021/51/576

Billy Hutchinson:

Would I call for the death threat....?

Aine Lawlor:

Yes.

Billy Hutchinson:

It's neither here nor there whether I would call for the death threat to be shifted and I'm not going to do that.

Aine Lawlor:

Wouldn't it be in the interest of your Party to have that death threat withdrawn?

Billy Hutchinson:

Well whether it's in the interest of my Party or whether it's not, I am saying to you here and now, loudly and clearly, that this is an internal matter for the UVF. I have been involved more than six years in trying to stop people from being expelled and trying to stop people from suffering from punishment beatings and in all that time there are statutory agencies and Government agencies in Northern Ireland who know my position and my position is I will not get involved in internal stuff with the UVF because it means that someone has lost weapons, it means that someone is an informer and it means that someone within that organisation is going to be disciplined by their own. Now that is not my role to do, people who actually are involved in these organisations and have meeted out I would say punishment in the past will have to actually sort of sort these things out themselves. The position of Billy Wright is up to Billy Wright and the CLMC and no-one else, it's not my job, it's not the PUP, the PUP have not threatened anyone, but let me say my wife has suffered quite a deal from this, from the accusations that people have made through, totally false accusations against me, and she's also had to actually live through an abortion of an attempt on my life. My life was threatened by people who are supporters of Billy Wright and the only reason...

©DFA/2021/51/576

Aine Lawlor:

Have you any evidence of that, that's an allegation?

Billy Hutchinson:

Well the evidence is with the police, it's not an allegation, the evidence is with the police. The police actually told me on the 2nd of August, when I came home from a Linfield-Liverpool match, and told me that my life was going to be taken the next morning by supporters of the Portadown unit which had been disbanded and the police quite clearly told me that an informer rang the confidential telephone, gave the names of the UVF men who were going to do it, I don't know who they are but the police know who they are. Now anybody who wants to check that, the Tennen (pho) Street Police Station on the Shankill Road are quite free and willing, I was informed about what to do with my security I mean, and that is a definite threat that someone was going to take my life.

Aine Lawlor:

Doesn't, these latest developments, doesn't that leave your Party not speaking for all of Loyalism, doesn't the turn out at that rally last night show that there is a substantial division and doesn't that weaken your Party.

Billy Hutchinson:

Well I suppose that what we could say is that the people who were representative at that party last night take a DUP line and, you know, so why would it be any different from last night and the night before? The DUP people have taken a different line from us, but what I must say is that the allegations that were made on the platform are totally untrue and what I would point to here is that Billy Wright has said that we're involved in some sort of initiation of Irish dancing classes and Irish language classes on the Shankill, I'm involved in many projects on the Shankill Road but I am not involved in any Irish language or Irish dancing classes, not because I wouldn't want to be or not because Billy Wright would threaten me not to be but what

©DFA/2021/51/576

I am saying is that I am not involved in them and what I would remind people of is that Billy Wright made a statement in the Belfast Telegraph after Drumcree that he actually played Gaelic football and he had Catholic relatives who lived in the Republic of Ireland and he loved them to death, so Billy Wright has no right to stand and point the finger at people and can I say here and now that there was a school teacher, or a school principal I should say from primary school where Irish dancing is taking place, was looking for me yesterday and left a message that he was getting nasty letters from people about the dancing classes, so I just wonder who sending the nasty letters?

Aine Lawlor:

One other point, the Reverend William McCrea was on the platform last night, he said he was there defending free speech, what do you make of his appearance there?

Billy Hutchinson:

Well I am very glad that for the first time in twenty-seven years Mr. McCrea has took this stance because I served sixteen years in prison and I had two colleagues who served fourteen years and sixteen years in prison and they were totally innocent of the crime in Portadown, they were set up by British Intelligence and had no part in the murder, but those people served fourteen and sixteen years and Mr. McCrea never opened his mouth or lifted his finger to actually try and help those people, so that proves that Mr. McCrea has some sort of interest in cases of injustice. I have never known Mr. McCrea to have any interest in cases of injustice and I think what Mr. McCrea did last night on that platform was blow his cover. We all knew and had known for a long time and suspected that Mr. McCrea was a confidante of Mr. Wright's and, you know, we never had the proof, but I think that Mr. McCrea gave us all the proof last night and I think that questions need to be asked of Mr. McCrea and he should be asked about the Mitchell Principles because, after all, we're being told that Mr. Wright is being shut up because he doesn't agree with our political direction, does that mean that Mr. Wright wants the ceasefire broken and he wants to return to the killing of innocent people or does it....

©DFA/2021/51/576

Aine Lawlor:

We have to leave it there I'm afraid.

Billy Hutchinson:

Well I think that RTE should be very very careful and should allow people to have their say, but the point is I have tried to ensure that people do not lose their lives and we get a resolved agreement on Northern Ireland without the loss of life, I would ask Mr. McCrea can he claim the same?

Aine Lawlor:

Billy Hutchinson of the Progressive Unionist Party, thank you very much indeed.

****

©DFA/2021/51/576