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S/S Ó hUiginn
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**Confidential**

**Conversation with Brendán McCionnaith, 14 January 1997**

**Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition**

Further to the report in today's *News Letter* which claims that the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition "spurning peace plans and are already drawing up a 'battle plan'", Mr. McCionnaith said that the report was a figment of someone's imagination and completely untrue. The group has issued a statement to this effect (attached) and is making a complaint to the paper. The following additional points of interest arose;

1. Following a meeting with John Hume before Christmas, the group is due to meet the Secretary of State next Monday (3.00pm) in the course of which they intend to pose "twenty to thirty questions about last year and this year". (In response to our enquiry, the British side of the Secretariat informed us that the Secretary of State's private office have no knowledge of such a meeting).

2. They met with Archbishop Sean Brady last night. They explained their position to him including their view of the less than positive role of Archbishop Eames. Archbishop Brady did not attempt to contest this. The Archbishop appeared to make it clear that he viewed the meeting very much as an educational exercise.

3. The last contact they had with Ronnie Flanagan was the week before Drumcree last year. There has been no contact from any RUC officer in the interim. The group has not, and does not intend to initiate any contact with the RUC in the light of events last year.

4. An attempt by a local curate to arrange contact between the group and the local Orange Order before Christmas has come to nought. The group had made it clear that they wanted a face-to-face meeting accompanied by a statement that the contact was underway. This appeared to end the initiative.

5. The group was surprised and angry that Archbishop Eames should have, in their view, been so precipitous as to tell the press that talks were underway. Consideration by the group of his letter to them has yet to occur (they intend to discuss it next week).

6. The Craigavon Police Liaison Committee was in touch with group with a view to exploring ways of resolving the problem. In reply, the group effectively said that it saw no role for the Committee since it had no nationalists on it and, further, that some of the

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Committee's members were active in support of the Orange Order.

7. There are rumours that workplaces known to employ mainly protestants have brought their summer holidays forward from 12 July to 4 July. Since the Drumcree march is due to take place on 6 July, this has encouraged speculation on the Garvaghy Road that unionist employers are seeking to facilitate another standoff by making sure that loyalists working for them are not out of pocket when manning the barricades.

8. McCionnaith heard from a press contact that the North Review will report on 27 January and will recommend an independent body. What remains at issue is whether such a body has executive or advisory powers.

Eamonn McKee
Security Section
14 January 1997

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From: Garvaghy Resident's Coalition at ☎ +44 (01762) 338334
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Press Release - Effective immediate

## Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition

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# Garvaghy Residents Deny "Battle Plan" Report

Portadown, Northern Ireland, 14th January 1997 - The Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition deny allegations in today's *News Letter* that residents have drawn up a supposed battle plan for Drumcree '97. "This report is false and spurious", said Breandán Mac Cionnaith, Chairman of the Resident's Coalition. "We have contacted the *News Letter* and formally complained about this article."

We now challenge the *News Letter* to demonstrate its own credibility by issuing a full retraction of the story in tomorrow's paper or else name their anonymous source.

Over the past number of months a number of articles have appeared in the media which we believe are part of a deliberate campaign to discredit Portadown's Nationalist community. Mr Mac Cionnaith said, "We believe that there is a campaign of deliberate smear and misinformation designed to discredit the Nationalist community and to scape goat the Residents' Coalition and individuals involved the their campaign."

The spokesperson for the residents' coalition went on to say."The only one to benefit this and other false stories are the Orange Unionist establishment and anti-Nationalist sections within the RUC."

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