

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Orange Order/Garvaghy Residents Proximity Talks
Armagh, 18 July 1998

The British delegation consisted of Jonathan Powell, Tony McCusker, David Watkins, and Robert Crawford. Peter Quinn and Rev. Roy Magee continued their role as facilitators. The Residents were represented by Breandán MacCionnaith, Joe Duffy, Rosemary Nelson, Martina Ruane, Pauline, Donna, Don and Orla. The Orange Order were represented by Denis Watson (Armagh County), George Patton (Grand Lodge), David Burrows and Mr. McLoughlin (both Portadown Lodges). The Government was represented by the undersigned.

The talks began just after 9.00am and continued until a few minutes before midnight. They ended after both sides had exchanged the last in a series of texts (attached). They are scheduled to resume on Tuesday (to be confirmed). The discussions between the British side and the Residents were minuted (at the latter's insistence).

The following points of interest emerged over the course of the day:

1. The obvious but essential point that emerged is that the Orangemen were apparently prepared to agree to participate in the forum and in a form of contact with the residents (i.e. same room but speaking through a chair) but only after their parade had completed its return journey to Portadown from Drumcree. They were not prepared to spell out clearly the details of their engagement in either fora in writing. The Residents want the civic forum (with social and economic programmes) delivered as of right by the British government, will accept talks with the Orange through a chair but will not commit to a parade this year - in other words that action on the forum and on talks will lead to a long term resolution of the issues which make a parade unacceptable.

2. A (relatively) promising morning passed into an afternoon marked by a hardening of attitudes on both sides, sparked by an Orange threat to walk out if a parade was not on this year. Despite this threat, Rev. Magee indicated that the Orange Order rank and file was pretty near desperate to get out of the hole they had found the Order in. Various comments indicated that Watson was being particularly difficult despite the unrelenting pressure on the Orange Order to find an accommodation. It also emerged that the Orangemen were seriously unfamiliar with the whole territory

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of negotiation, a point ruefully made by a number of the British officials. The mood was not helped by suggestions that the socio-economic package was contingent on Orange consent to the overall deal (a point Watkins was insistent on as the British side's only card). Nor was it helped when, despite advice to the contrary, Powell called Martin McGuinness twice to use his good offices with the residents, earning a slap on the wrist from MacCionnaith (delivered in typical MacCionnaith style) who used the occasion to make the point that the residents were independent. The residents were concerned that their text was being diluted for presentation to the Orange and, combined with the back-channelling, brought them to actively consider ceasing all verbal communication. This was averted by the task of formulating an agreed text.

3. The inexperience of the Orangemen with the whole notion of negotiation emerged most clearly after the residents presented the proposed agreed text (Annex 2). The point of this text was to end the rather prolonged but fruitless pursuit of an agreed 'he said-she said' document which was formed to no obvious advantage (Annex 1). In discussions between the undersigned and the British, it emerged that the latter were prepared to sign on to the suggested text (though McCusker felt that a caveat was required that the economic package was contingent on all sides agreeing - a particular bone of contention with the residents).

4. Powell spent over an hour in advocacy with the Orange Order to convince them to accept the text by inserting their demand that it all depended on a parade. With this square-bracketed text both sides would have a clear idea of the choice and the context in which it was being made. A clearly frustrated British side emerged not having elicited a clear line or much logic from the Orange. They put this down to tiredness (it was after 11.00 pm) and inexperience. Powell, having already briefed Blair earlier in the evening, spoke about asking Blair to phone the Orangemen to get them to sign on (I am unaware whether this call was made but suspect that it was not). The Orange then prepared their contribution (Annex 3) which, interestingly, nibbled at the Agreed text. We agreed to propose to both sides that the talks break to consider both texts and resume on Tuesday.

5. Powell bore the vicissitudes and pressures of the day well, remaining firm where appropriate but psychologically supple enough in his engagements to avoid giving either side an easy exit. He seemed to end the day relatively optimistic. Quinn and

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Magee acted with impeccable integrity throughout, ensuring that the views of both sides were faithfully and fully conveyed to each other. They ended the day tired and, as Quinn admitted, a bit punch-drunk.

6. David Thompson (Trimble's election agent and advisor) was present in the corridors throughout the day. He did not engage, as far as I am aware, in the diplomatic shuttling and was happy to find a room and discuss the broader issues connected to the Drumcree fall-out. He told me that he did not believe that there was a 'new unionism' to be constructed under Trimble's leadership, though he emphasised that Trimble's political vision was deeply personal and sincere. Rather, it was his generation alone within unionism which was familiar with what he loosely termed integration within Northern Ireland. His was politically the lost generation (presumably he meant up until the Good Friday Agreement). The preceding unionist generation had known only privilege (represented by Harold Gracie and what Thompson called the dinosaurs represented by the Orange delegation - and by the residents, he added). The younger upcoming unionist generation had only experienced division (hence the hardline nature of the UUP's young lions). Thompson felt that it was up to his generation to pull this political experiment off - if it failed, then Northern Ireland would go down the tubes. (It should be added that Thompson tends toward casually apocalyptic scenarios.) On the business to hand, Thompson indicated that Trimble had no particular desire to get the Orangemen out of the hole. Indeed he said that the civic forum idea could hurt the UUP electorally in the area by skewing funding away from the UUP electorate (this concern seems to have prompted his arrival at the talks).

Eamonn McKee

Eamonn McKee
Security Section
Anglo-Irish Division
19 July 1998

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ANNEX 1

Notwithstanding the inalienable rights of freedom of movement and freedom of assembly, the Orange Order recognises that it has a shared responsibility to build a climate of mutual respect and trust through an effective form of dialogue.

The GRRC acknowledge the Orange Order's acceptance that there is a shared responsibility on everyone to create a climate of mutual respect and trust. As proof of their commitment to resolve this matter through dialogue the GRRC believes the Orange Order should publicly call off protests in relation to Drumcree.

The Orange Order believes that peaceful protest is justifiable where the rights of individuals or groups are unjustly curtailed.

The Orange Order in Portadown is prepared to utilize the structure of a Civic Forum (the specifics of which are still to be agreed) to discuss issues, where appropriate, relative to their parade back along the Garvaghy Road following the annual Church Service.

The GRRC welcomes the Orange Order participation in the Civic Forum. However, the GRRC believes that the Government must ensure that the forum continues irrespective of whether one or more groups fail to participate.

The Orange Order believes that it is not the responsibility of Government to ensure any forum is kept open. A forum is of the people, by the people, for the people.

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The GRRC agree to talks to continue through a chairperson, however their preferred option is direct dialogue.

The Orange Order in Portadown is prepared to participate in the Civic Forum after the 1998 parade has returned along its traditional route from Drumcree Parish Church back into Portadown. They are opposed to cultural apartheid and are anxious to have everone's ethos respected.

The GRRC is prepared to discuss all issues, in relation to marches, but the GRRC believes that the Orange Order should not seek a pre-determined outcome. The GRRC want the remit of the proposed structure to discuss parades widened to include all issues affecting Portadown, including community relations.

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ANNEX 2

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Agreed Statement

The following proposals have been agreed by the representatives of the Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition, the Orange Order and the British Government as the basis for further consultations with their respective constituencies.

The outcome of these consultations will form the basis for discussions between all sides under agreed arrangements and to be convened on .....

1. All sides acknowledge that there is a shared responsibility on everyone to create a climate of mutual respect and trust. As proof of their commitment to help create this climate the Orange Order will halt all its current protests. For their part the Residents remain open to persuasion on a march in the future, through an effective form of dialogue.

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2. All sides agree to participate in the Civic Forum. The Structure, composition, and purpose of this forum remains to be agreed. The British Government and the facilitators undertake to continue dialogue with the relevant parties to agree these matters.

3. The British Government is committed to play its full part in the ongoing implementation and funding of the social, economic and cultural programmes designed to resolve the underlying problems effecting the Garvaghy Road and Portadown. The British Government undertake to continue dialogue with the relevant parties to agree and finalise the nature of these social, economic, and cultural programmes.

4. The GRRC and the Orange Order will agree to participate in a parallel agreed structure dealing with Parades. Both sides will convene and discuss all relevant matters through agreed independent chairperson(s).

All sides would like to record their appreciation for the contribution of the facilitators during these talks.

End

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ANNEX 3

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1. All sides acknowledge that there is a shared responsibility on everyone to create a climate of mutual respect and trust. Everyone must be committed to help create this climate. The Orange Order will call off its protests when this year's parade returns along its traditional route down the Garvaghy Road to Portadown and the parade for subsequent years is guaranteed.

2. All sides agree to participate in a Civic Forum, which is equitably based if the structure, composition and purpose of the Forum is agreed. The Government and the facilitators undertake to continue dialogue with the relevant parties to agree these matters.

3. The Government is committed to play its full part in the implementation and funding of the social, economic and cultural programmes designed to resolve the underlying problems affecting Portadown. The Government undertakes to continue dialogue with the relevant parties to agree and finalise the nature of these social, economic and cultural programmes.

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