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Ambassador:

Sec. Gallagher, CG
Joint Secretary,
Amb. London
A-I Counsellors

Re: Meeting with Sean McPhilemy

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I had lunch last Friday (June 11) with Sean McPhilemy, author of ***The Committee***, and his NY based attorney, Russell Smith. Both had been in Washington for the week being deposed by the attorneys for the Prentice brothers, who are taking the libel action against McPhilemy and his US publishers in the DC federal courts.

While our conversation was mainly social and discursive in nature, McPhilemy conveyed some information which, for what it is worth, I now record:

- McPhilemy found the depositions grueling. They had lasted all day for 5 days and were conducted in the presence of a video camera, stenographer and the Prentice brothers themselves. There had been no direct discussion with the Prentices. While he found the experience tense and exhausting, McPhilemy and his lawyer felt that the depositions had gone well for them and said that the Prentices appeared to be very deflated by the import of his testimony;

- McPhilemy had argued that the deposition should take place in his home city of Oxford, England. While the judge concluded that they should take place in Washington, he ruled that the Prentice brothers had to pay all of the travel, subsistence and incidental expenses of McPhilemy coming to DC. This, he said, had greatly rankled the brothers;

- McPhilemy said that he has been interviewed twice by a Manchester policeman attached to the Port investigation into the murder of Rosemary Nelson. McPhilemy was fairly upbeat in his assessment of the quality of the investigation. His British solicitor had a very high opinion of Port himself and McPhilemy was impressed by the policeman who had interviewed him. The latter showed a very full knowledge of everything that McPhilemy had written on the collusion issue and had promised him that any information supplied would not be passed on to the RUC. McPhilemy felt that the Port investigation was serious, had teeth and there would be results;

- McPhilemy told me that the former RUC sergeant, John Weir, who had been

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involved in sectarian murders and had recently made a number of allegations about security force collusion in loyalist attacks, had recently been staying with him at his home in Oxford, having arrived in England practically penniless. However, he expected that Weir would soon return to Nigeria, where he has lived for some time;

- McPhilemy said that Jim Sands - who had been a major source of the original Channel 4 documentary - had turned again. It will be recalled that he recently recanted his previous recantation of the allegations in an affidavit to McPhilemy's lawyers and in an interview on video. After that he left Northern Ireland for Scotland for fear that he would be subject to pressure from the RUC and the ***Sunday Times*** (who are in a libel battle with McPhilemy). However, he recently returned to Northern Ireland and has it appears turned again and has reverted to his previous story to the Sunday Times that the original Channel 4 documentary was bogus and a lie.

- McPhilemy expects his libel case in London against the ***Sunday Times*** to be heard in January next year. The Sunday Times had sought to have the case heard without a jury. McPhilemy's lawyers were opposed to this application but feared that the court might agree to the Sunday Times request.

Adrian O'Neill
14 June, 1999

c/c all officers; Mr McKee

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