

Copy 15 Mr Black
for Home Office

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Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association Parade and Meeting in
Londonderry on Saturday, 5th October, 1968

I was on duty in Derry City on Saturday, the 5th October and had charge of the police there during a procession and meeting held by the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.

The minimum number of police was detailed for duty in the streets and a force was held in reserve at Victoria and Waterside Police Stations.

From half-past two approximately people congregated in the forecourt to Waterside L.M.S. Station. A number of people, comprising women and children were on the footpaths and some sat on a wall convenient to the railway station. As time progressed groups of males of varying age groups congregated in the forecourt and it was obvious that they were to participate in the proposed procession. A number carried banners and placards. About 3.15 p.m. I announced over the loud hailer the terms of the Minister's Order prohibiting parades and meetings in the areas specified, which areas I outlined. I also made it clear in the announcement that outside of the prohibited areas persons could parade and hold their meeting, but that they would not be allowed to parade or hold a meeting in contravention of the Minister's Order and that the police would see that the Order was enforced. I warned those who were not connected with the proposed parade and meeting - and especially women and children - to leave the area and to go home. I repeated this announcement about 7 or 8 minutes later. At this time groups of men who arrived earlier had been marshalled into a form of procession. In front was a banner with the caption - "CIVIL RIGHTS MARCH".

Shortly after half past three the procession moved off, but was halted, before they travelled very far, by some of the organisers, to await the arrival of a bus load of persons from Belfast. Some minutes later the parade moved off again. They processed by way of Duke Street towards Craigavon Bridge - this was against the one-way traffic system and contrary to the proposed route notified to the police. This unnotified change of route is not however material in that all parades within the areas specified in the Minister's Order were banned.

I arranged for parties of police to be called from Victoria Police Station and a party already detailed for another point to be moved forthwith to Duke Street at the Craigavon Bridge end to stop the marchers. I moved from my position at the top of Distillery Brae on foot via Spencer Road to Duke Street. I arrived there about 4 p.m. At that time police vehicles had been placed across Duke Street, some 50 yards from the corner of Spencer Road. A cordon of police was lined up between the police vehicles and the marchers. There was no sign of any commotion; the parade had been halted and the participants had gathered round some makeshift platform. Miss Betty Sinclair was speaking at the time. I cannot give any details of her speech but a report regarding this aspect will be furnished later. Miss Sinclair was followed by other speakers namely (names may not be given in order) Eamonn McCann, Ivan Cooper, Paul Grace, Eamonn Meagher and Mr. E. McAteer, M.P.

Although this procession moved along Duke Street for some 300 yards and the meeting, albeit an impromptu one (it was initially the intention of the organisers to hold their meeting at the Diamond), no action was taken by the police to disperse the demonstrators. Perhaps one should add at this juncture that Mr. Fitt, M.P., who was amongst those heading the procession, was injured when the procession was stopped by the police. A fuller report regarding the incident involving Mr. Fitt will be furnished. While he claims that he was struck on the head by a police baton, there is the possibility that he was hit on the head not by the police but by a banner pole held by one of the

/demonstrators

demonstrators and swung towards the police. Suffice to say at this stage that Mr. Pitt sustained a superficial laceration about $\frac{3}{4}$ inch long on the top of the head and vault of the skull. Two stitches were inserted. In his attempt to get through the police cordon, and although informed by a sergeant "Sorry, you are not going through", Mr. Pitt replied "I am going through", he made a dive at the sergeant with his head down and butted the sergeant with his head. The sergeant caught him around the shoulders. While the sergeant was holding him by the shoulders a pole, believed to be a banner pole, skimmed the sergeant's head. The sergeant saw blood coming from Mr. Pitt's head. The sergeant gave him a clean handkerchief and Mr. Pitt said "I am Gerry Pitt, it is not your fault - you had a job to do". The sergeant arrested him for disorderly behaviour and obstructing the police in the execution of their duty and conveyed him to Victoria Police Station, arriving there at 3.55 p.m. From there he was taken to hospital - he arrived at approximately 4.20 p.m. and was discharged between 4.50 and 5 p.m.

I was present in Duke Street from shortly after 4 p.m. From then and until the meeting concluded at about 4.40 p.m. I did not see any policeman with a drawn baton. Apart from halting the procession in Duke Street, no action was taken by the police to break up the meeting or to disperse those in attendance. I was very conscious of the fact that any intervention by the police to disperse the demonstrators would have created trouble. At the conclusion of the meeting the chief marshal addressed the crowd (using a police loud hailer) by telling them that the meeting had terminated and asking them to go home and not to resort to violence. This advice was also given by Miss Sinclair. The advice was met by a mixture of cheering and jeering. Shortly after this the placard poles, some of them purposely broken, were hurled at the police and a fusillade of stones. I instructed the police to take no action beyond holding arms. The police were subject to a fusillade of missiles for about two minutes before batons were drawn and the police moved in to disperse the demonstrators, who had resorted to this form of attack on the police without provocation. The water wagons were also called into use to clear the area and to restore order.

Perhaps at this juncture one should refer to the adverse criticism in the press, radio and television regarding police brutality. No where has it been made clear that the police only took action to disperse the unlawful assembly (apart from stopping the demonstrators who had processed for 300 yards and had held their meeting) when they were subjected to attack by the demonstrators. In my view the police showed considerable patience and restraint. One may pose the questions - Why then should their tolerance have suddenly erupted? What gave rise to their use of force to disperse the demonstrators? After all the demonstrators had processed, had held their meeting and were told to disperse. No one more than the police would have been happier to accept this position. Unfortunately, however, the advice given by Miss Sinclair and the chief marshal was unheeded and the demonstrators, not the police, were the first to resort to violence.

On the question as to the undue, or unnecessary, amount of force used by the police, I consider this an unjustifiable criticism. From details passed to me by the police at Londonderry regarding injuries sustained by civilians, I am told that those who attended hospital were treated for superficial injuries. Of the three civilians who were detained in hospital, two said they had fallen off a wall and the third said he had been trampled upon by the crowd. In referring to injuries sustained by civilians I am not accepting that all of those who were treated at the hospital received their injuries at the hands of the police. Many of them said that they had been struck by stones and flying glass.

Fourteen police were injured - two are detained in hospital. Constable Breen, Aghmacloy, sustained an injury to his right knee and had to be detained for hospital treatment. On Sunday, 6th October, Constable McCully was hit on the knee by a stone and sustained a broken kneecap.

/Reference

Reference is made in to-day's "IRISH NEWS" that police outrageously attacked the vital parts of the male anatomy; that men were struck on the testicles with the baton. Inquiries at hospital indicate that no persons attending there for treatment made any complaint of receiving an injury to such a part and no person was treated for such an injury. A quantity of the missiles hurled at the police has been retained. Some of these consist of long pieces of wood with nails protruding. A fuller report will be furnished when all particulars regarding Saturday's episode have been collated.

(W. MENHAG)

7th October, 1968.