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INSPECTOR GENERAL, R.U.C.

29th June, 1968.

Protest meeting in Dungannon regarding Caledon evictions at  
8 p.m. on Saturday, 22nd June, 1968.

Dear *John*,

The meeting organised by Mr. Austin Currie, M.P., to protest against the recent evictions in Caledon commenced at 8.30 p.m. on Saturday, 22nd June, and lasted for a little over one hour. Heavy rain fell throughout and about 300 persons listened to the speakers. The platform party consisted of the following:-

- (1) Kevin AGNEW, Solicitor, Maghera, Co. Londonderry.
- (2) John BRENNAN, Belfast, National Democratic Party.
- (3) Mr. Austin CURRIE, M.P. for East Tyrone.
- (4) John DONAGHY, Urban District Council, Dungannon.
- (5) Mr. Gerry FITT, M.P. for Dock.
- (6) Mr. Thomas GORMLEY, M.P. for Mid Tyrone.
- (7) Frederick HEATLEY, Belfast, representing Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.
- (8) Mr. Edward McATEER, M.P. for Foyle.
- (9) Mrs. Patricia McCLUSKEY, Urban District Council, Dungannon.

The tricolour was not displayed. The meeting was held in a predominantly Nationalist area of Dungannon. There were no interruptions or incidents of any kind throughout the proceedings.

I enclose verbatim accounts of the speeches which were made on this occasion.

Yours sincerely,

*Forward to the Home (Cabinet)* **Bill Meharg.**

*This can be reviewed by  
him when read.*

J. G. Hill, Esq.,  
Ministry of Home Affairs,  
Stormont,  
BELFAST.  
BT4 3SU

*John*

*3/7/68.*

*(1) ...*  
*(2) ...*  
*See ...*  
*...*

Protest Rally held in Dungannon on Saturday evening, June 22nd, 1968.

The chairman, John Donaghy, an Independent member of Dungannon Urban Council, introduced the speakers: Mrs. Patricia McCluskey, Mr. Thomas Gormley, Mr. Kevin Agnew, Mr. John Brennan, Mr. Fred Heatley, Mr. Gerry Fitt, Mr. Eddie McAteer and Mr. Austin Currie, who organised the meeting as a protest against alleged discrimination in housing at Caledon.

Mrs. Patricia McCluskey, chairman of the Campaign for Social Justice, said:

"This meeting is heartening for all those who care about social justice. It is a sign that we are becoming a sharing, caring Christian society. This is Human Rights Year. The European Convention for the protection of human rights has declared in Article Eight 'Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home, his correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law'. Article Fourteen says 'The enjoyment of the rights and freedoms set forth in this Convention shall be secured without discrimination on any grounds, such as language, political or other opinions, national or social origins, association with a national minority.'

"This being so, we have been asking for many months, and indeed many years, that a fair system of allocation of houses should be thought up and dealt with by a points system or else by a committee of impartial people who would select the tenants on merit. This motion has been proposed several times in this town of Dungannon, and it has never met with any success, and it has also been proposed in Stormont on many occasions.

"Had this points system been forthcoming, I venture to say that the Goodfellow family of Caledon would now be in possession of a home of their own. Justice must be seen to be done, and in the case of a family like this, with three young children, I feel that a points system should have given them a house. They have seen a house in the same locality given to an unmarried girl of nineteen, and so justice is not seen to be done."

"Mr. McAteer has recently said in Stormont 'Is there any sense in us being here at all?' In furtherance of community relations, the parties there had become an official opposition. Now I know that good community relations would exist but for actions like the Caledon incident, where people had been waiting twenty years for a home, some of them living in terrible conditions, so I ask to-night that social justice be done to all those people in need of a home."

/Mr. Thomas Gormley,

Mr. Thomas Gormley, M.P., said:

"The attendance at this meeting, despite the weather, shows that there has been a lot of public interest shown in what Mr. Currie recently tried to achieve. This is a particular instance where justice was not done. A lady of nineteen got a house in preference to many Catholic applicants. In this particular area, Dungannon Rural area, it takes someone with moral courage to do what Mr. Currie did to bring the matter to the notice of the people.

"The people of Northern Ireland are subsidised to the back teeth; local councils are subsidised to the tune of 77 per cent. It is up to people like Gerry Fitt to point out to the British Government the need to see that finances were distributed to local authorities. I call on everyone here to support the action taken by Mr. Currie. This will show Unionist and other councillors that they must take heed. Don't be apathetic. You should do more than just attend meetings and just go home again. You should get at your councillors to examine their conscience and also ask them if they are fit people to be on the Council. That goes for all councils, including Dungannon.

"These things have been going on far too long. We have been told that the solution was to build many more houses, but this is not the answer. People who have been waiting ten or twelve years for a house should not be overlooked. All you people here go away and do something about this problem.

"It takes quite a bit of courage to do what Mr. Currie has done and it is bound to shake the Unionist councillors. Recently the Stormont Government turned down the question of giving the vote to people of 18 but this didn't stop them giving houses to people of 19."

Mr. Kevin Agnew said:

"I am glad to associate myself with this protest, which I hope will bear fruit in the very near future. We don't have to wait till 1968 to realise that there is discrimination in housing in every rural council which is dominated by the Orange junta. We have been living with discrimination and injustice of every type since 1920. But the unfortunate thing is that some of the Unionist and Orange leaders seem to believe that the public money is theirs to provide houses and jobs for their friends and leaders and supporters. But the Collector of Taxes, when he sends out a demand, knows no colour bar. The taxmen don't see that the Papishes don't get houses and so shouldn't pay taxes. The Nationalist people pay their share and as long as they are condemned to live under the bloody old Union Jack it is up to them, every man and woman, to put their shoulders behind Austin Currie.

"I tell you, put your shoulders behind them, and let the Orange people of Dungannon and of Stormont and everywhere else in the occupied Six Counties realise that you have had just about enough of Unionist and Orange rule and British rule.

"If you only realised the strength you would be if you got together, you would not be content to go home and talk about this bit of a meeting. You would do something about it. There is a committee in Dungannon, headed by two great workers for their cause - Dr. and Mrs. McCluskey - and you could give them support, and do something for them. It is only by united action that you can compel this rotten crowd that rule from Belfast that you are not going to be walked on.

"They talk about the ecumenical spirit. There isn't much ecumenical spirit or goodwill in the Orange Lodges or the Tory men in Belfast. It's all right as long as we're doing the giving and they're taking.

"As long as you are condemned to live in the Occupied Six Counties, you must see you get your share of houses. As a Republican, I don't care about houses. It is the aim of the rebels in the North to bring an end to British occupation and Stormont and Orange rule. I appeal to you to get into your local Republican Club and do something about it".

Mr. John Brennan, M.P., said:

"Although there has been no case in Belfast like that in Caledon, at some time or another there has been discrimination in Belfast also. Austin Currie has proved to all that unless action is taken to remove injustices from our midst, the powers-that-be in this so-called democratic state will continue to allow the local authorities to allocate housing more on the basis of political and religious expediency than on the basis of need.

"In 1966 I listened to Mr. Carron talking about a Kevin Moffett, of Maguiresbridge, and more recently to Mr. Boyd talking about a "squatter" at Tullyvannon, in this Dungannon Rural District, and in answer to evidence of discrimination and unfair allocation of housing, Captain Long replied that Parliament had placed on local authorities the duty of allocating houses they owned, managed and maintained. The Government said that the final question of allocation must rest with the council concerned, and until the supply of housing equalled demand or exceeded it, this would be so. A child of seven could give a better answer. It isn't true that local authorities own the houses or accommodation they provide. The money to build these comes from the Government Consolidated Loan Fund, a sixty-year loan, and therefore it's up to the Government to take the necessary action to see that justice is done in allocating houses.

"The Government must be shown that we in the Minority mean business. No-one wants violent action. What we want is a firm of protest to make the Government realise that the people with a sense of justice want the Government to use justice for all, irrespective of creed or class. The Government must act once and for all to take the power of the allocation of housing from the local authorities, who are blatantly defying the laws of justice.

"There can be no justification for the allocation of houses to single people or childless couples, to the exclusion of those with five or six children. Houses must be allocated on the basis of need, and I appeal to you people of Dungannon to give Mr. Currie every support to protect against this allocation, and against every other case of injustice, not only in Caledon but in any that might occur in the future".

Mr. Fred Heatley said:

"We of the Civil Rights Association have adopted a neutral attitude over the past few years, but my impression now is that we must adopt the policy of Austin Currie, the policy of civil disobedience, the only policy that will succeed in these six counties.

"Our children are freeborn in this so-called free democracy. There is no democracy in Northern Ireland. This incident in Caledon is only one of many cases of injustice. In Belfast we have had the case of the children's playgrounds being closed because of the bigoted action of some councillors. People are denied their right to vote in local government elections. We have people losing their jobs because of this discrimination.

"About Caledon now - on television we witnessed a brutal, callous inhuman and unchristian injustice where a family took a house, perhaps illegally, because legally it was not offered to them, but what made it worse was the fact that next door a house was offered to a young woman - a 19 year-old unmarried girl.

"What sort of conscience had this girl? What sort of conscience had these bailiffs? Surely no man has to stoop so low as to be a bailiff. We know unemployment is high in the Six Counties, but surely no man is low enough to have to be a bailiff, to evict a family forcibly, including a woman with a baby in her arms.

"It is a disgrace to these Six Counties, it is a disgrace to mankind, and we ask the people of Dungannon and of the Six Counties to show their abhorrence of it. We must claim our rights. We have had sixty years of pleading at Stormont and elsewhere. Our leaders must come out, as Austin Currie has done, and show that the people demand human rights and will have those rights. We all pledge our support to Mr. Currie. We aren't a political organisation. We have nothing to gain, but we will lead this campaign and see that the people get their rights."

Mr. Gerry Fitt, M.P., said:

"Two years ago in Trafalgar Square, I pointed out the danger signals which I thought were then becoming apparent in Northern Ireland, and said that if the majority could not look to the support of the Labour Government at Westminster to right the wrongs done here since 1920, then who could blame the people for taking steps to remedy their own position. I was immediately attacked by the Unionist Party, from the Prime Minister right down to their own ignorant back-benchers, and was told that I was advocating violence, that I was advocating the reintroduction of the gun into Irish politics.

"What I said then, I repeat here to-night. If the Northern Ireland Government does not take steps to remedy the injustices which exist here, then the people will, with my support and the support of the Republican Labour Party, take steps to fight on their own behalf and right these wrongs.

"When I first

/wrongs.

"When I first made this speech I got very little support, but within a few days, in no uncertain manner, the first man in Northern Ireland to give me support was Austin Currie. He immediately committed himself to what I had been stressing. And to-night in Dungannon the ordinary people of this area have shown that they are willing to accept that type of leadership.

"I believe that unless we take a stand in 1968, in Human Rights Year, to bring about the institution of human rights in Northern Ireland, then we would have no-one to blame for the state in which we find ourselves, only ourselves. The only people who can help defeat the Unionist conspiracy to trample over the minority in Northern Ireland are within the sound of my voice to-night.

"I want to advocate a certain course of action, and I say it knowing the consequences. We had the famous case of Captain Boycott in Irish history. He was a steward, giving instructions for evictions. We had the mass of the Irish people venting their wrath because of the duties in which he was engaged. I ask each and everyone here to use the same policy to the bailiffs in Caledon last week. You all know them and their activities. I ask you to boycott them. If you can prevent them building up their business, do so, don't speak to them in the street, don't speak to their families, and let them see what their activities can lead to.

"This is a united protest meeting to-night. On Thursday afternoon in Stormont, when I defended Austin Currie, the Minister stood up and said, 'But there were Nationalist members on the council and they didn't object. I find that now to be a blatant lie. Three did object, and I ask you to afford them every support you can, but the two Nationalists who didn't object aren't worthy of the support of any freedom-lover in Northern Ireland and particularly in Dungannon.

"Within the past two months, two very important meetings have taken place in Northern Ireland. One was in Armagh, where again we had a united platform protesting against the ban on a parade. The other is this one here to-night. I say now that politics has changed. You can get nothing by pleading and whimpering to the Unionist Government at Stormont. I am prepared within the next two or three to continue playing my role as a Parliamentarian. But I have no hesitation in saying that if it is finally brought to me that there is nothing to be gained from this type of representation, I will resign all my elective hopes and take other steps to remedy the situation which exists in Northern Ireland.

"I said in Stormont on Thursday that the Leader of the Nationalist Party - Mr. McAteer was there when I said it - has played a difficult role over the past two or three years. He has tried to play the parliamentary role. We have tried to ask for justice. Austin Currie, particularly in relation to the Caledon affair, has tried every parliamentary device, from

/the local council

/from

the local council to private meetings with the Prime Minister, in the hope that he could impress upon the bigots at Stormont the necessity for implementing human justice and social rights. This one particular case highlights the frustration we have to meet at Stormont because there can be absolutely no answer given for what happened in Dungannon last week.

"I am standing in his constituency - and I invite him to mine - but I want to say that the so-called representative of this constituency Mr. John Taylor is nothing more nor less than a confounded liar. John Taylor stood in Parliament and said these people who got the house had been living in a condemned house. He also used the phrase 'O.P.D.' trying to make us believe it was an old person's dwelling. Everyone knows that is not the truth. The Unionist Party, trying to cover up the allocation of a house to a 19-year-old girl, had to resort to blatant untruths and confounded lies. We know this was given to the girl, not because she needed a house, but because of the political influence she could wield. We also know that she is employed by Mr. Brian McRoberts, who has intimated his intention to fight me in West Belfast - a contest that I am looking forward to, and I hope it comes sooner rather than later.

"Again, not one Cabinet Minister in Parliament has been able to justify this allocation. Privately, they have admitted that they cannot justify the allocation. We all know this. We heard the stupid, silly reply that this girl's name had been down on the waiting list for well over one year. These are the words used by Mr. John Taylor. Now, if her name was down well over one year, she must have been 17½ when she put her name down for a house. I asked the question at that time - knowing well that there would be no answer forthcoming - when do you put your name down for a house in Dungannon? Do you put it down at First Communion or Confirmation or when you leave school? It may be that the same conditions that apply at Eton and Oxford apply in Dungannon, that your mother takes you out after Baptism and puts your name down to see that you get a house.

"Over the past couple of months, it has become clearly evident that there has been a right-wing Fascist attempt to take over the Government of Northern Ireland. We have been told that Captain O'Neill is a great Liberal - he is a great liberal talker but he certainly does not act as a great liberal. We have been told that he is the best of a bad bunch, that the minority of Northern Ireland should not do anything to upset Terence's plans. I say this, a lot of people would try to tell you that Paisley would walk over you with hobnail boots and Captain O'Neill would walk over you with bedroom slippers. So far as I am concerned, nobody is going to walk over me, whether they are in their bare feet or not.

"In Parliament, we have this attempt to take over, led by Craig and Brooke, and that ignorant guttersnipe and jackal Desmond Boal. We see

/these people

/We see

these people imagining themselves in the role of future dictator.

"This meeting to-night means that we, the Nationalist minority, are not prepared to be walked over by anyone, whether Terence O'Neill or any of his successors. It means that we have to engage in a campaign of civil disobedience, if we had to engage in a campaign other than civil disobedience, if a day came when we had to fight in the street for the protection of our future, for the protection of our wives and children, then that day can't come soon enough.

"This is only the beginning of the massive protest which we intend to carry on in the Six-Counties. I am a Connolly Socialist and this year is the Centenary of James Connolly's birth. He said, "Ireland apart from her people means nothing to me". Anyone who can walk the streets and see the wrongs done to Irishmen and Irishwomen and does not burn to right the wrongs, is a liar and a cheat, no matter how much he says he loves Ireland. I subscribe to that philosophy; it is men and women who are Ireland to me. I believe that there will never be peace in Ireland until we establish a 32-County Workers' Republic.

This has always been my motivation.

"The ordinary people are in control of their own destinies. No amount of armed 'B' specials, no amount of militant Orangemen, no amount of illegal U.V.F. Volunteers, no amount of Gestapo police, can prevent the onward march of the Irish people, if we so decide to take the first step along the road. I call on you to watch the activities of myself and Austin Currie in the future, and I hope that our numbers will be added to by every Parliamentary and locally-elected Minority representative in Northern Ireland. We will give the lead, I ask you to follow."

Mr. Eddie McAteer said:

"You are not alone in this protest. Discrimination is not something which has recently occurred in Dungannon alone. However, it is not for me to make idle threats here to-night, but to weigh up soberly what the chances are in a change of campaign. One of the great and glorious features of this meeting is that different elements of our people are happily now united in an adversity. It is true that as some speakers have indicated already some of us have made strenuous efforts to try the peaceful way and some of us may have lost political friends in making that effort. But I want to assure you that this was the way that had to be tried, if it were for nothing else but to demonstrate its complete futility. "At the end of this trial period it is becoming depressingly clear that there is a plot on foot to goad our people into an unthinking action.

"If we Father Murphys are compelled to go home and get our pikes, then let it be so. But I assure you that the strength of the whole united Irish people here in the North of Ireland is behind a genuine liberation movement. It is not yet at the stage, I believe, when the fruit can be immediately gathered, but the day is not very far distant when we must

/cease to accept

/when we must

cease to accept the insults and the fobbing off which has been the parliamentary game for so very long and go back to ourselves as the only source of our salvation."

Mr. Currie said:

"I am glad that so many people have turned out to show their support for what has been happening in Caledon on our side of the house, and to show their protestation against what the Unionist bigots in that area have been trying to push down our throats. By your support to-night, you show that you support the moves which have been made in your interests over the past few weeks.

"I wish to pay tribute to the Goodfellows, the Gildernews and the Joe Campbell's, who were prepared to come out and show their courage and dedication in this matter. It isn't everyone who is prepared to squat. It isn't everyone who is prepared to break into houses to show their convictions. It isn't everyone who has the courage to refuse to strike or to retaliate under severe provocation. I have nothing but praise for the action of those people who saw their children, their wives, their sisters being dragged out into the public street and because of the strength of their courage refused to retaliate and obeyed instructions. I support them and praise them to the hilt for their courage and for their strength.

"This protest meeting has been made necessary because of what can only be described as a blatant example of discrimination and segregation, which differs from the system in the Southern States of America or in South Africa only in that it has as its basis discrimination on the grounds of religion rather than colour. Let us accept that that is the case in these Six Counties. Caledon, and the injustice exposed there over the past few months and particularly over the past few days, is just the tip of the iceberg of Unionist injustice, the system by which Unionists have retained power over the past forty years.

"This meeting has been called, not only to protest against a brutal eviction, not only because of the glaring example of inequality and injustice where a 19-year-old unmarried girl receives a tenancy of a council house, when 268 other people on the waiting list struggle for the allocation of twelve houses under construction, but also because of the system which makes this thing possible. People might ask why Caledon, why not some other area, but if we could break the system in Caledon, it would be broken in Dungannon and Donaghmore, in Coalisland and Cookstown, Pomeroy and all over this area, where Unionists hold sway at the present time. That is why Caledon is so important. That is why we owe a debt of gratitude to the people of Caledon who not only fought their own fight bravely, but fought our fight bravely as well.

"In Stormont last week John Taylor, I said, was a darned liar. He continues to be a damned liar about everything he has said. Any talk

/this man

/Any talk

this man comes out with about community relations shows he is a hypocrite too. A few weeks ago there was a Civic Week in Dungannon. I was asked to judge the Civic Week Parade in the company of John Taylor and some others. This man says he is in favour of community relations, but he refused to come on the same platform as me, even during Civic Week. This man is nothing but a damned hypocrite.

"There are many other things I could say on this occasion. There is one thing I want to ask you to do to-night. If a 19-year-old girl could get a house in Caledon, there is no reason why other teenagers could not get houses in Dungannon or Cockstown or anywhere else. You who have young children, or expect young children in the near future, as soon as they are born, when you register their birth put them down for a house as well. Age, seemingly, is no barrier.

"In a number of speeches over the past year or so I have repeatedly asserted that if Captain O'Neill and his government did not take the steps to implement his promises, then the minority would be forced to use other methods from those we have been using over the years. I have emphasised the increasing frustration, disillusionment and anger of the minority that the platitudes of O'Neill have not been followed up by the action necessary to remove the grievances. I have insisted that I abhor violence, but that I would support a policy of non-violent Civil Disobedience to publicise injustice and to force the government to implement its promises.

"The action I took in Caledon last Thursday occurred only after I had taken every other possible measure to rectify what I am convinced is a glaring example of injustice. We would not be worthy of the people we represent if, in the words of Teddy Kennedy when speaking of his martyred brother Bobby, "We saw injustice and did not try to right it".

"The events in Caledon are the result of frustration and disillusionment and are a sign of what will happen in the near future and will continue to happen if long-complained-of injustices are not remedied. I hope Caledon is an end, but, unless our just demands are satisfied, it will be a beginning - there will be other Caledons.

"Remember, we do not plead for special privileges, we stand up like men and demand what are just our rights.

"I presume that political pressure will be exerted on the Attorney General to whom the Caledon Squatting has been referred, to insist on his 'pound of flesh'. I can tell the Unionists now that I will not be dissuaded from doing my duty by sentences, fines or threats, and I will be prepared to pay the price, in Crumlin Road if necessary. I give way to no man in my desire for good community relations, but I remind everyone that good community relations must be based on justice and equal treatment for all sections of the community..

/It is because