

- 7 NOV 1978

D/S. Ford

N.I.O. BELFAST
NOTE OF A MEETING

AT 4.30 PM ON MONDAY 6 NOVEMBER IN STORMONT CASTLE

Those Present: Secretary of State Mr William Ross MP
 Mr Huckle Bishop Eames
 Mr Pilling

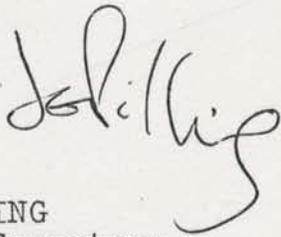
Mr Ross recalled that he had brought a group of councillors to see Mr Concannon about 18 months ago to discuss the drift of Protestants across the Foyle. Since then the position had grown much worse. In 1967/68 there were 12,000 Protestant electors on the West Bank of the Foyle and this was now down to 4,000 or less. The main causes were the points system for housing which worked against Protestants and, of course, IRA violence. Many facilities on the West Bank, such as churches, were now patronised mostly by people from the East Bank. The good relations on Londonderry Council were a myth. The appearance of co-operation arose from the fact that the Protestants were few enough not to represent a threat and had tried to be constructive. They had gone way out on a branch and Paisley was now cutting it off. Mr Ross's two suggestions were that something should be done about housing, though he recognised the political difficulty about that, and that the RUC Station should be re-sited closer to the Fountain Estate. On housing there was no difficulty about the Fountain Estate where the residents controlled allocations but more houses in the Glen and Northland estates should be made available to Protestants. On RUC headquarters it appeared that the Chief Constable was reluctant to see a move, partly perhaps because this would require new sub-stations in the city. In fact this would be a good thing. There should also be a new state primary school close to the Fountain area. A speed-up in the re-development of the Fountain would be useful.

2. Bishop Eames said that figures made available by Lord Melchett in the last two months showed that 40% of the Waterside was Roman Catholic. They had not come to make sectarian points but in the cause of a genuinely integrated city. Families were now moving out of the city rapidly. In the next 10/15 years there would be a large Roman Catholic majority West of the Bann. It was urgent that the Protestants West of the Foyle should feel wanted and reassured.

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Perhaps there could a pilot scheme to give the Protestants a fair chance of housing on the West Bank. The RUC Station was in the category of a status symbol. Protestants in Londonderry were prepared to take moderate leadership but Ian Paisley was trying to get a foothold and it was possible that people at the grass roots would soon turn to extremists.

3. Mr Ross confirmed that Mr Paisley represented a serious threat.
4. Bishop Eames said that early prosecution for participation in the illegal marches would help.
5. The Secretary of State said that he could not promise anything but he would look into the problem and see what could be done. After Mr Ross and Bishop Eames had gone, the Secretary of State asked Mr Huckle to undertake a serious study to see if the Protestant drift from the West Bank could be halted.



J G PILLING
Private Secretary

7 November 1978

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