

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL

Mr. Linton

cc PS/Mr Patten (B&L)
PS/Mr Scott (B&L)
Mr Carvill ✓
Mr Reeve (ref para 4)

SINN FEIN (Miss Mulligan's minute of 30/1/84)

1. Mr Barry has commented at some length on the question of Sinn Fein constituency activity. It is notable that Sinn Fein have been observing the spirit of the law, keeping premises clean and paying for electricity and other services, even if they infringe the strict letter by not seeking planning permission. Such planning permission would however seem inevitable in many circumstances.

2. Given this background I think we would simply aggravate events if we went in with the heavy hand of the law. On the other hand where demolition of properties could sensibly be brought forward then it would obviously be helpful if such action could be taken as soon as possible.

3. Essentially however Sinn Fein's success depends on their positively seeking out problems as well as responding quickly to express need, and to their infiltration of community and youth groups. Their infantry hold the ground, and do so in a way which provides a service which most of the community need. I suspect that whilst the law could fire a few "rockets" it could not deliver the force of infantry which would be needed to take over and hold the enemy territory. It is fairly easy to despair of finding a solution here and simply to blame SDLP for being insufficiently active. However I think that we might need to consider separately the extent to which we can give aid and succour to those who are already in the field.

4. I am hoping that PAB may be able to talk to some of the community workers on the ground to tap their perceptions and see if they feel there is anything more Government could do. For example I have heard from experienced community workers complaints that because they lack paid deputies their time is too much taken up with office affairs rather than using their experience on the front line with the Provos. Some of the established reputable agencies may be helped to give a stronger and better service than

Mr Carvill, for what it is worth I believe my asked for permitted earlier against SF. I agree with Mr Patten's view that we should not go in with the heavy hand of the law. On the other hand where demolition of properties could sensibly be brought forward then it would obviously be helpful if such action could be taken as soon as possible. Essentially however Sinn Fein's success depends on their positively seeking out problems as well as responding quickly to express need, and to their infiltration of community and youth groups. Their infantry hold the ground, and do so in a way which provides a service which most of the community need. I suspect that whilst the law could fire a few "rockets" it could not deliver the force of infantry which would be needed to take over and hold the enemy territory. It is fairly easy to despair of finding a solution here and simply to blame SDLP for being insufficiently active. However I think that we might need to consider separately the extent to which we can give aid and succour to those who are already in the field. I am hoping that PAB may be able to talk to some of the community workers on the ground to tap their perceptions and see if they feel there is anything more Government could do. For example I have heard from experienced community workers complaints that because they lack paid deputies their time is too much taken up with office affairs rather than using their experience on the front line with the Provos. Some of the established reputable agencies may be helped to give a stronger and better service than

Mr Linton
4/2/84
File

CONFIDENTIAL

E.R.

CONFIDENTIAL
CONFIDENTIAL

the centres supported by Sinn Fein, and the use by DHSS of mobile teams and the "self-enquiry" computers may also have some part to play. If our enquiries at the community worker level produce any useful ideas I hope we might be able to arrange for a small group of people to meet with Mr Carvill and perhaps a representative from DOE, DED and DHSS to see whether anything further can be done through official sources. A further point that strikes me is that whilst Sinn Fein move into Housing Executive properties awaiting demolition the SDLP do not seem to have done likewise. This may be due to their own shortage of staff to man a new centre, but if they are now recruiting more young people I think we might consider whether the SDLP could be put in touch with ways in which they could get access to premises (albeit for only short periods at a time) on a similar basis to that practiced by Sinn Fein.

5. This is a very difficult problem; I am sure enormously difficult for the Civil Servants and others on the ground. However I hope we will not lose track of it, and even if you decide that use of the law provides no solution perhaps we can go on looking for other ways of minimising the impact of Sinn Fein in areas like West Belfast and Londonderry.

AJM

A J MERIFIELD
3 February 1984

2
CONFIDENTIAL
CONFIDENTIAL