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HCS/7/5

- cc. PS/Ministers B&L - M
- PS/PUS B&L - M
- Mr Brennan - M
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Innes
- Mr Ferneyhough
- Mr Chesterton - M
- Mr G Hewitt
- Mr Spence
- Mr Elliott
- Miss Elliott - M

PS/Secretary of State B&L - M

DISSOLUTION OF THE ASSEMBLY

1. The Secretary of State and recipients of copies of this minute may be interested to know that I have received from Mr Leslie Tait, who had been seconded from the NICS to act as an Assistant Clerk of the Assembly, a first hand account of the nature and tone of the events which took place in the Assembly on 23/24 June, following the Order to Dissolve.

2. Mr Tait brought with him a copy of one of the tapes he used to record the proceedings which "ran on" for a relatively brief time beyond the point at which the Speaker had communicated to members the fact of dissolution. I have retained this and it is available to anyone who would be interested in hearing it. It is apparent from the tape that those officers of the Assembly, such as Mr Tait and Dr Peter Smyth, who took proper steps to "unplug" TV lighting and to persuade the media (unsuccessfully) to leave, were subjected to a barrage of vulgar and threatening abuse both by inference and by name. They were freely described as "Lundys", "traitors", "lackies of the Secretary of State" etc. The tape does not make agreeable or civilised hearing. It more closely resembles a beer hall in Munich during the early days of Hitler than the proceedings of a democratic elected Assembly. This demonstration of rage and implicit or explicit threat was predominantly a DUP affair. Only two OUPs took part

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in it, and Mr Tait tells me that since the dissolution senior members of the OUP have been sufficiently courteous to entertain the Clerk and other Assembly staff to lunch. I myself am lunching with them tomorrow, in order to thank all those members of the NICS who were employed in the Assembly for their devotion to duty in what cannot always have been easy or agreeable circumstances.

4. It has apparently now been necessary for the police to advise Tait, against whom there appears to have been a particular animus, to take a number of prudent steps for his own protection.

5. Mr Tait emphasised how outrageous had been the suggestions of Dr Paisley and others that the RUC had used unnecessary force to eject members. The Secretary of State may be interested to see the attached copy of a statement subsequently made by him to the police. He tells me that the conduct of some of the members of DUP Party officers and of the mob gathered outside towards the RUC was absolutely disgraceful.

K P Bloomfield

K P BLOOMFIELD

2 July 1986

CONFIDENTIAL

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF: L J TAIT

AGE OF WITNESS [if over 21 enter "over 21"]: Over 21

OCCUPATION OF WITNESS: Clerk Assistant to the Northern Ireland Assembly

ADDRESS: Parliament Buildings, Stormont, Belfast BT4 3SY

TO BE COMPLETED
WHEN THE
STATEMENT HAS
BEEN WRITTEN

I declare that this statement consisting of 4 pages, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated this 30 day of June

19 86
[Handwritten Signature]
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

SIGNATURE OF MEMBER by whom
statement was recorded or received

I was on duty at the Table in the Assembly Chamber when - at 3.53 pm on Monday 23 June 1986 - the proceedings were interrupted by the Speaker (Mr James Kilfedder MP) to read a communication from the Private Secretary to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announcing the dissolution of the Assembly. Having read the letter, Mr Kilfedder left the Chamber. I noticed that several other Members also left the Chamber. There was commotion from Members remaining in the Chamber and I observed a number of Members converging on that end of the Table which bore the Mace. The Acting Serjeant-at-Arms (Mr C G N Kavanagh) who had approached the Table to recover the Mace, was elbowed aside and prevented from taking possession of it. I saw Mr Seawright climbing on to the Table and heard Mr Paisley tell him to come down. Having concurrently with these events been collecting my papers, including the Table Log, I then left the Chamber in company with the Clerk to the Assembly and the Second Clerk Assistant. As I left I saw that Mr Beattie was occupying the Speaker's Chair,

Some minutes later I was in the main lobby outside the Chamber, in conversation with the Clerk to the Assembly and other officers and I told the Clerk I would go to the Strangers' Gallery to endeavour to effect the removal of television camera crews and other media personnel who were continuing to film, record and photograph there, and also those members of the public who had remained. On going to the Gallery I found that the Second Clerk Assistant (Dr P D Smyth) was already there and in conversation with media personnel. I went to the far side of the Gallery from Dr Smyth and asked members of another camera crew to cease recording and leave the precincts.

My requests were acknowledged, but not acted upon and at that moment the presence and intentions of Dr Smyth and myself were observed by ex-Members in the Chamber below and loud protest made at our presence and activities. The chorus was joined by persons in the Strangers' Gallery and I heard

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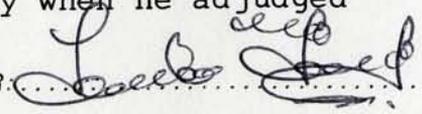
Mr Beattie speak, purporting to direct Dr Smyth and me to leave the Gallery. I heard Mr Paisley say something to the effect that Pressmen and others in the Gallery did not have to leave. It was clear to Dr Smyth and me that in the circumstances prevailing continuance of our efforts at that time was unlikely to be effective, and we withdrew from the Gallery.

I was continuously in the Assembly precincts thereafter until I left the building at approximately 3.00 am on Tuesday 24 June after all ex-Members had left the building. For most of the intervening time I was in and around the main lobby, outside the Assembly Chamber. I saw various ex-Members come to the doors and engage in exchanges with those in the lobby. Specifically, I saw and heard certain ex-Members direct verbal abuse and taunts at individual policemen on duty outside the Chamber. In particular I saw and heard Mr Vitty using abusive and threatening language and making threatening gestures to policemen. I saw Mr Foster engage in similar behaviour and he directly addressed insulting remarks at me. Mr Paisley also made some comment apparently supportive of Mr Foster which I took to be directed at me, but which was not wholly audible to me. Mr Wells appeared at the door on a number of occasions and uttered remarks which I took to be taunts addressed to the Clerk to the Assembly and others. The actions herein described took place intermittently over a protracted period between 6.00 pm on Monday 23 June and 2.0 am on Tuesday 24 June 1986.

Exchanges took place on a number of occasions at the entrance to the Chamber between the Clerk to the Assembly and Mr Paisley and on several such occasions I heard Mr Paisley invite Mr Kennedy to have him and other ex-Members removed by the Police.

I was told that in the course of the mock 'debate' which was taking place in the Chamber Mr Paisley, Mr McCrea and others had made allegations and used terms of abuse about and in reference to the Second Clerk Assistant and me, and that this had been done both in the presence of members of the public and a number of media representatives including television and radio crews. (I subsequently heard a recorded extract containing highly defamatory references to Dr Smyth and myself by Mr Paisley and Mr McCrea.)

When the decision was finally taken to invoke powers under Article 9(1) of the Public Order (NI) Order 1981 (which decision was taken by the Clerk to the Assembly when he adjudged

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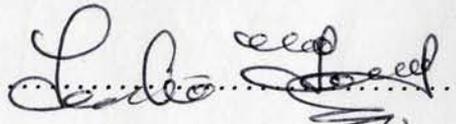
STATEMENT OF: L J TAIT

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appropriate having regard to the evidence that all other possibilities appeared to be excluded by the attitude of those in occupation of the Chamber) and the Divisional Commander of police was requested to effect the removal of ex-Members, I was present with the Clerk and the Divisional Commander and his subordinate commanders in the lobby. I had previously observed that police personnel of all ranks had been briefed at length and in detail as to the execution of the operation, should it become unavoidable.

I was present when the police entered the Chamber, which they did in the numbers and formations precisely as planned and given in the briefing. The first group to enter the Chamber was charged with the task of retrieving the Mace. This they did, and it was handed to the Acting Serjeant-at-Arms, who took it into his possession and proceeded to place it in secure storage. Each ex-Member of the Assembly was approached by a party of RUC personnel comprising a Sergeant and four Constables. He was offered the opportunity to walk out of the Chamber and the building of his own volition. Some ex-Members indicated that they wished to walk out unaided and were allowed to do so. Most ex-Members however made it clear that they were not prepared to walk out and each of these was carried by a squad of four Constables led by a Sergeant. During all these events I was continuously present either in the Chamber, in the lobby outside the Chamber, or in the Central Hall, in full sight of the lobby and the front entrance to Parliament Buildings. I heard ex-Members, as they were being carried out by the RUC bearer parties, being repeatedly asked if they wished to walk instead of being carried. I saw and heard one ex-Member opting to walk and saw him being immediately and carefully placed on his feet and allowed to proceed unimpeded to the front door. Most ex-Members refused the option of walking and had to be carried. As Mr Paisley was being carried out I heard him say he had to go to his office. He was told that that could not be allowed. There were no television camera crews present in the building during these events, the Clerk and I having directed their withdrawal some time before. There were however some press representatives remaining in the Central Hall area and these witnessed the removal of ex-Members. Amongst those present were Mr David Watson (Belfast Telegraph) and Mr David Capper (BBC). In the process of removal of ex-Members several offered physical resistance and verbal abuse to police personnel. Most however remained passive and silent. At no stage in the long sequence of events during which RUC personnel were subjected to abuse from ex-Members did I see

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any policeman respond to the abuse and taunts of ex-Members. Notwithstanding that many had to my knowledge been on continuous duty for very long periods that day and night - I had myself been on duty in the Assembly precincts since 6.45 am on Monday 23 June - the bearing, demeanour, and above all the patience and restraint of policemen of all ranks was quite impeccable. This in my opinion is all the more remarkable when seen in the context that the police personnel inside the building were aware of the injuries being sustained by their comrades outside the building at the hands of the protesting mob which had assembled there in response, as I was given to understand, to the call made by Mr Paisley in the mock debate after dissolution, which was carried in radio/television transmissions earlier that evening.

After ex-Members had been removed from the building those who requested access for retrieval of items of personal property were re-admitted and allowed to proceed, accompanied, to party accommodation.

I overheard Mr Paisley and other unidentified ex-Members shouting after they had been removed from the building and I was told that Mr Paisley had said to the police something to the effect - "..... Don't come crying to me when your houses are burned," and that this had been greeted with cheering from the crowd. When told of this (and later when I heard and saw it in a television transmission) I reflected that, having regard to the circumstances in which the words were uttered, it was difficult to see them in any other light than of incitement.

I was told that Mr Paisley, and other ex-Members who have police escorts and vehicles had meanwhile called for their vehicles and when these arrived they had left Parliament Buildings and the Stormont Estate.

I wish to state that in my opinion, based upon personal observation of the events herein described at all stages, the police operation in removal of ex-Members from the building was in conception, planning and execution quite irreproachable. Furthermore the forbearance of policemen of all ranks, in the face of sustained provocation, is in my opinion deserving of the highest praise. I felt impelled to warmly congratulate the Divisional Commander (Chief Superintendent S Dobson) at the time, on the excellence of the planning, direction and execution of the operation and I think it only fair that I here make my views a matter of record.

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