

cc: Mr Watkins
Mr Maccabe
Mr Leach
Mr Corbett

From: Mr J A Canavan
CCRU

20 September 1993

To: Mr P T Durbin
CPL Division

*Copy. Sally
papers rec'd.
M. H. S.*

MEETING WITH FAMILIES AGAINST INTIMIDATION AND TERROR (FAIT)

1. Your minute of 19 August asked CCRU to prepare briefing for Sir John Wheeler's meeting with representatives of FAIT on 29 September.
2. I attach a background note on FAIT, TAB A, and details of its executive committee and membership, TAB B.
3. I hope this is helpful. If you require anything further please let me know.

J. A. Canavan

p/p

J A CANAVAN

TC3910/9/93

BACKGROUND NOTE**FAMILIES AGAINST INTIMIDATION AND TERROR (FAIT)**

1. In 1990 a Downpatrick woman, Nancy Gracey, whose son was shot by PIRA in a punishment shooting, began to publicly challenge the paramilitaries and to attract media attention. Subsequently, a number of other people joined her in this task and the FAIT organisation was established. Its primary objectives are:-
 - to promote the well being of all families in Northern Ireland, and, in particular, to help families to live free from intimidation and terror from paramilitary groups;
 - to provide support services for families who have suffered intimidation and terror; and
 - to prevent and remove the fear of suffering, intimidation and terror from families.

2. Following its formation, FAIT became involved in a number of cases where there were threats of paramilitary punishment. Their most publicised involvement was in relation to the "Newry Hostages Campaign". In that incident they were heavily involved in orchestrating the campaign on behalf of the families of those who had been threatened and also the associated publicity. In this they were heavily supported by the Peace Train Organisation which includes a number of prominent people, including politicians from both sides. That incident brought the organisation into a certain amount of conflict within the area and with the Roman Catholic

TC3910/9/93

church and PIRA. At one level criticism related to their handling of the incident and at another to their perceived political orientation. The PIRA made considerable propaganda suggesting that FAIT was simply the mouthpiece of the Workers Party/Official IRA. This was strongly denied by FAIT.

3. FAIT is one of a number of groups providing a valuable and necessary service for people under threat of paramilitary violence and for their families. There are few, if any, community interventions which are more dangerous and difficult. The work highlights incidents of abuse and the human rights dimension and contributes to a greater understanding about the issues underlying the divisions in Northern Ireland.
4. The main difference between FAIT and other organisations involved in this work is the use of publicity. FAIT adopts a role of highlighting the paramilitary issues while the others concentrate on their work with individuals. Co-ordination between groups has not been great and there have been claims about FAIT being more interested in publicity than substance.
5. The work of FAIT does not sit easily within the traditional or accepted sense of community relations in terms of promoting greater cross-community contact or in increasing mutual understanding. It has to be acknowledged, however, that this particular form of paramilitary activity, whether in carrying out punishment shootings or implementing exclusion orders, is clearly a symptom of the overall community relations problems in Northern Ireland. CCRU considers that FAIT's work programme, particularly that in highlighting incidents of abuse and the human rights dimension could

TC3910/9/93

contribute to greater understanding about the issues underlying the divisions in Northern Ireland.

6. Grant from CCRU has been provided towards salary and running costs as follows:-

£10,664 - 1991/92

£30,000 - 1992/93

£29,802.75 - 1993/94

7. There have been various reactions to the work of FAIT. Its preference to publicise the issues involved has drawn criticism from some, mainly those already involved in the work, but also from Sinn Fein and PIRA. This is a risk strategy for FAIT because there has been a suggestion that PIRA has indicated that anyone using FAIT will get a heavier sentence. It is, therefore, a critical issue for them in terms of achieving credibility on the streets. If they are seen as publicity seekers and political opportunists then neither victims or families will use them and their role will greatly diminish.
8. On the political side it has been alleged that members of FAIT have close links with the Workers party (WP) and in turn the Official IRA. These links have been denied by FAIT but not by the WP. There is, however, little doubt that some prominent FAIT members have WP links. The WP connection with OIRA has been an "open secret" which led, in April 1992, to some members within the WP breaking away to form the Democratic Left Party; nevertheless the WP's public condemnation and rejection of violence has helped to maintain infrequent contact with Ministers. Other bodies, for example, NICRC and the Probation Service, have also expressed concerns about FAIT's organisational and political naivete.

TC3910/9/93

9. Political Affairs Branch suggest that this meeting with representatives of FAIT should be treated as a one-off; lest it should raise expectations within the WP of more frequent access to Ministers.
10. Details of the management committee and general membership (not exhaustive) are attached at TAB B. Some of the individuals are well known to CCRU and are highly respected in the voluntary sector. However, most are not known and are either community activists or individuals who have been affected by punishment activities of paramilitaries.

MEETING WITH FAIT

1. Thank you for your minute of 24 August 1993 on the political background to FAIT. As you know, we are in the process of preparing briefing for the Ministerial meeting. CCRU has provided grant assistance to the organisation in the past:-

£10,564 - 1991/92

£30,000 - 1992/93

£29,903 - 1993/94

2. We have obtained a list from FAIT of its executive committee and its membership (not exhaustive). My understanding is that the membership extends beyond the WP. Some of the individuals on the list are well known to CCRU and are well respected in the voluntary sector. Most are unknown to us and seem to be either community activists or individuals who have suffered punishment by paramilitaries.

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TC3910/9/93