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F Peace Train

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NOTE OF A MEETING WITH THE PEACE TRAIN ORGANISATION AT STORMONT CASTLE ON 23 AUGUST

Present were:

- Mr Sam McAughtry
- Mr Paddy Devlin
- Mr Christopher McGimpsey
- Mr Liam Kennedy

1. The meeting was requested by the Peace Train Organisation to discuss their future programme of work and the possibilities of funding from CCRU.
2. At the outset Sam McAughtry explained the role undertaken so far by the group concentrating initially on the issue of PIRA bombings of the Dublin/Belfast railway line. The emphasis in that campaign was to highlight the futility of the PIRA campaign and to force both PIRA and Sinn Fein to publicly state their objective in this campaign. In addition to that particular campaign the Organisation had also embraced and endorsed the FAIT group which was attempting to highlight the whole question of paramilitary punishments.
3. While the group had come together on a single issue, they felt there was a need for them to stay together to continue to highlight the futility of armed conflict and to illustrate that there is no justification for its continuation.
4. The Organisation was now at a point where it required some support and administration to harness the energy, enthusiasm and time of its members effectively. They said that if that support was provided the Organisation would then examine a number of other work programmes, for example,
 - further Peace Trains - to Londonderry, Brussels and United States (though Paddy Devlin had major reservations on the latter).

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- Conference - the promotion of a major conference which would examine paramilitary philosophy for continuing the arms struggle. Essentially this would be an examination of Sinn Fein justification for supporting armed conflict in terms of Irish culture being under attack; discrimination against Catholics; rejection of Nationalist aspirations to a United Ireland.
 - Economic forum - this is a somewhat hazy proposal to create a formal structure to take evidence about the economic impacts of political violence (it seems very similar to studies under the New Ireland Forum umbrella).
 - Television spectacular - essentially this proposes to be an Irish version of "Live Aid" with simultaneous concerts in Dublin and Belfast to be shown nationally on television and also emulating the Phil Collin's trick of appearing in both concerts on the same day.
5. There was a general discussion about the immediate funding requirements of the Organisation. Liam Kennedy outlined a fairly ambitious list of needs which included:-

Administrator/Secretary
Development Officer
Research/Information Officer
Office support
Premises and equipment

6. Consensus on what was needed was absent in that Paddy Devlin in particular felt that the Organisation really needed someone to co-ordinate their activities and to try and establish in more detail the aims and objectives of the Organisation together with some sort of operational plan. This might take somewhere between 6-12 months and a bid to CCRU should concentrate on getting what was essentially seed funding.

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7. I explained the role of CCRU and the format which an application would have to take. I also made clear that the final decision on this project, as with others, would rest with the Minister of State.
8. It was agreed that Liam Kennedy would prepare a draft submission for CCRU outlining the areas of support and indicating the work programme to be undertaken over the first 12 months. I agreed that CCRU would offer comments on the proposal in draft stage.
9. On the ~~figures~~ ^{of figures} of the debate the question of the men in Newry Cathedral came up and it was interesting to compare and contrast their perception of what was happening, against that of the Church authorities and also the Community Relations Council. They were not unaware of a view that the issue was continuing because of the involvement of the Peace Train Group and FAIT. However, they felt very strongly that the actions of PIRA and the subsequent attempts by Sinn Fein to undermine those involved with allegations of political manipulation, had to be resisted and that to walk away from the issue at this stage would be tantamount to giving in to paramilitary threats. They clearly saw it as their role to take on PIRA and Sinn Fein in their every attempt to justify the politics of the armed struggle.

Epilala

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cc: Mr Hamilton

Mr Walker

← Mr ← McNeil

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