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UNDER/ SEC 5/4/5  
19 MAY 1997  
CENT SEC

FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE  
19 MAY 1997

- cc PS/Secretary of State (L&B)
- PS/Mr Ingram (L&B)
- PS/Mr Murphy (L&B)
- PS/PUS (L&B)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Steele
- Mr Bell
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Leach
- Mr Wood (L&B)
- Mr Perry
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Webb
- Mr Warner

633/97

in letter 20.5

Mr Maccabe  
NOTE Report file

ASST/ SEC 13/15  
2 MAY 1997  
C.C.R.U.

Mr T Smyth  
Parades Review Project Team

**MEETING WITH CHAIRMAN OF PARADES COMMISSION**

Thank you for your submission of 14 May, providing briefing for the courtesy call by the Chairman of Parades Commission, Mr Alistair Graham, on the Secretary of State. This took place in Millbank on 15 May. Mr Graham was accompanied by Richard Buchanan and the Secretary of State by PUS and myself. I apologise to Mr Steele and Mr Perry for the fact that it proved too difficult to use the VCR on this occasion.

2. Mr Graham explained that the Commission had held a large number of meetings with groups and individuals, with the marching Orders, residents groups and politicians, including Sinn Fein (most recently Richard Gibney and Tom Hartley). They were also working in support of Brendan McAllister and the mediation network and were compiling a shortlist of alternative mediators. A first draft code of conduct has been prepared to set guidelines for parade organisers and the Commission had also spent

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some time considering the application of the guidelines in the Commission's own procedures in taking evidence and reaching conclusions. They have also commissioned research into public perceptions of band parades. He said the Commission was not seeking to ban individual parades but to find a consensual basis for them to take place.

3. Mr Graham pointed up a number of areas of concern for the Commission:-

- there was, as yet, no formal contact with the Orange Order, though they had met with local officials, such as Denis Watson, and others;
- they had had three difficult meetings with Brendan McKenna and were trying to set up a meeting between Father Stack and Denis Watson, but the prognosis for Drumcree was currently not good;
- there was a distinction between band parades and traditional marches - the former were less structured and often less disciplined, more provocative and labour-intensive in policing terms. Some research had been commissioned into public perceptions of band parades and it was possible this could be used to bring the malign affect of the worst of them to the public's attention.

4. Mr Graham reported that Mr Hume was meeting the head of the Orange Order to try to get the Order to issue a statement about marches. He thought it would also be very useful if David Trimble and John Hume would issue joint or individual statements about the need for a consensual approach to parades. In terms of Drumcree, McKenna was bitterly opposed to any march and the Orange Order were opposed to meeting him, so that made the situation even more difficult. The Commission had

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found that the areas where there was least cross-community contact were the most difficult to find an agreed way forward on parades. Mr Graham also thought the approach of the RUC in not declaring a decision on an individual march until the last minute was not correct in all circumstances. The 21 day notice of parades could help, though clearly the more difficult ones needed much longer than that to try to find a way though. The Chief Constable had been supportive of the Commission and they had one meeting with the RUC (Tim Lewis), with another scheduled for 29 May.

5. The Secretary of State asked how the Commission saw its role developing between now and Drumcree. Mr Graham said that they would continue to have the widest possible range of meetings in the Portadown area and would provide their views to the Chief Constable on a private (not public) basis. The Secretary of State said that the legislation should be in place by the autumn but the principle of the rule of law would still apply, including the right to march and the right to live free from disruption or intimidation. Local agreements were still the way forward and it was certainly desirable to have statements issued by the Orange Order and David Trimble to show leadership over the next number of weeks. PUS thought David Trimble might be recruitable after 22 May and also that the Chief Constable was signed up to a planned approach. One of the worrying aspects of the current situation was a recent loyalist killing which, for the first time, was said to be in retaliation for a disallowed march.

6. On the subject of band parades, as distinct from traditional marches, Mr Buchanan said that people did not make any distinction between the two. Their information was that both David Trimble and Watson were strongly opposed to band parades. They blocked up town centres, were provocative and manpower intensive for the police. The Commission hoped to take soundings on these and then to inform thinking and encourage the public generally to consider them as separate,

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unrelated events. The Secretary of State said this should be followed up, particularly to ascertain the RUC view on such parades. I have minuted Mr Perry separately on this subject.

7. In conclusion, the Secretary of State noted that there were only about six weeks to Drumcree and she wanted to see a co-ordinated effort, particularly between the RUC, the Parades Commission and the NIO, though, ultimately, as the law now stood, the Chief Constable held the ring. She would like to see a series of regular meetings for the purpose of pooling information and ensuring that all the relevant players were being brought into the discussion at the appropriate levels. Clearly, no one wanted a Drumcree III. The point about band parades should be followed up and she needed to meet representatives of residents groups and marching orders quickly. Finally, the Secretary of State asked for a draft letter which could go to Clive Leach to express appreciation for his allowing Mr Graham to take on the role with the Parades Commission. I would be grateful for a draft.

*Ken Lindsay*

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PS/SECRETARY OF STATE

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