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**FROM: F S WOODS  
INFORMATION SERVICE  
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cc Distribution

PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O

**WEEKLY INFORMATION BULLETIN: 7-13 July 1997**

Prospects for the week

The aftermath of Drumcree, prospects for the remainder of the marching season and the reaction to the joint paper on decommissioning will dominate events and headlines this week and for weeks to come. Over the weekend and today the world's media have been reporting and analysing exhaustively. Their speculation is that violence will reduce over the next few days, but rise again this weekend.

*k* Residents' associations have continued to handle the media with great skill, in marked contrast to some of the Loyal Orders.

Other potentially troublesome parades are at Bellaghy today (Monday) and Dunloy on Friday, but the main focus of interest will continue to be on the Twelfth day parades, especially Ormeau Road and Londonderry.

The one positive note from last week has been the generally good response to the Budget, particularly in relation to education. Otherwise local media have been reflecting in increasingly pessimistic mood in the run-up to the decision.

Media attention may come back to politics on Tuesday when parties are to return to a plenary session with their proposals for amendments to the joint paper on decommissioning. Weekend events will obviously have an impact on the perceived room for manoeuvre of participants.

The Eleventh Night bonfires will burn throughout loyalist areas on Friday, many in the middle of streets as in previous years. It is likely that some commentators may ask why roads can be blocked in this way but not by the Garvaghy Road festival. We may

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also face further questions on the difference in approach by the Government/RUC this year compared with last year.

Twelfth demonstrations will take place at 19 venues around the Province. The main parade involves 10 Districts walking through Belfast to the 'field' at Edenderry. While last year the main contentious area was Lower Ormeau this could quickly mushroom to much more widespread disputes this year, depending on the Drumcree decision and its aftermath.

Opportunities this week

Secretary of State has held news conferences today and yesterday, but we can expect continuing massive media interest and interview bids through the week, including foreign media. We should continue to put the Government's position properly on the record, to stress that these current problems cannot be separated from the wider issues that confront us in Northern Ireland as a whole.

It is worth noting that if the situation improves and the Twelfth weekend were to pass relatively quietly the presence of a story-hungry international media may offer an opportunity to redress some of the damage to the image of industry and tourism etc.. IDB and others have plans to capitalise on this should the opportunity arise.

A meeting with the Independent Orange Order is scheduled for today, and other early meetings with both sides are planned.

A \*visit to the Army on Tuesday could provide an opportunity for doorstepping or comment if required.

Northern Ireland is TOPS for questions on Wednesday.

On Thursday there is a \*meeting with members of the Equal Opportunities Commission.

Around the Departments it will be a light week with few announcements as the traditional holiday season gets underway.

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## **KEY THEMES**

### **Political**

The Government's objective in Northern Ireland is to facilitate reconciliation and a fair and long-term political settlement which will bring lasting stability and which will have broad support on both sides of the community. The principle of consent will be the key principle in the Government's policies on Northern Ireland. We will work to this end in close co-operation with the Irish government.

The people of Northern Ireland have the right to decide their own future and any settlement must be negotiated, not imposed. There will be no change in the status as a part of the UK without the clear and formal consent of a majority of the people who live here.

The Government is committed to achieving greater openness and accountability. We will listen to the views of the people and their political leaders, and we will create, through discussion, new institutions which fairly represent the interests and aspirations of both communities.

### **Current issue lines**

#### Officials/Sinn Fein Meetings

The purpose was to clarify our position and to assess whether the Republican movement is ready to give up violence and commit to politics alone.

The meetings were solely about clarification, and were in no way "parallel negotiations".

We acted in good faith, but it is difficult to give any credibility to Sinn Fein's talk of peace when the IRA kill and continue to target policemen.

#### Aide Memoire

we decided to publish the aide memoire after the second meeting between officials and Sinn Fein to make our position absolutely clear and to remove any shred of justification for claims that it was not clear.

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Ministerial contact with Sinn Fein representatives

Ministers will not meet Sinn Fein delegations while there is no IRA ceasefire, but they will not be deterred by the presence of Sinn Fein representatives from attending public functions or meetings to carry out their Ministerial duties. In the interests of their constituents Sinn Fein elected representatives will continue to be engaged at official level in consultation exercises and other functions.

**The Talks Process**

We believe that real progress can only be achieved through political dialogue and that the current process offers the best prospect of producing an agreed settlement. We will do everything possible to help it succeed and are not contemplating any alternative at present.

Implications of Drumcree

The problems seen at Drumcree this weekend cannot be separated from the issues that confront us in Northern Ireland as a whole and we must not lose sight of that. The talks process is designed to address the underlying problems; those talks can and must move forward. Nothing will deflect us - and, I hope, other parties from that aim. This is clearly a time for generosity and constructive engagement in that process.

Participation

We want these negotiations to be all-inclusive. The way is open to Sinn Fein but only if there is an unequivocal restoration of the IRA ceasefire, borne out by words and deeds. No-one can combine terrorism and democracy. If the IRA campaign continues, the talks must and will move on without Sinn Fein.

Loyalist ceasefire

Total and absolute commitment to the Mitchell Principles is an absolute requirement for participation. The CLMC ceasefire is still formally in place, but the words of a ceasefire declaration are meaningless unless reflected in deeds. We will not hesitate to take action if we feel any party has demonstrably dishonoured these principles.

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### Timeframe

Our target is to complete negotiations by end May 1998 (the period envisaged in the Entry to Negotiations etc Act as the point at which the Forum will cease to exist). A referendum can be held at any time up to May 1999.

Substantive negotiations will therefore need to start this autumn; to achieve that, we are determined to facilitate a resolution of the difficult and sensitive issue of decommissioning within the next few weeks.

### Resolving Decommissioning

The decommissioning issue needs to be resolved to the satisfaction of the Talks participants and all parties must have confidence that decommissioning is achievable. We believe that the set of proposals put forward by the two governments offers a basis which will facilitate that resolution and allow movement forward into substantive talks. We want to see all parties engage and move this process forward.

These proposals take account of the views expressed during debate and discussions over the past eight months, and reflect the recommendations of the Mitchell Report.

The Government wishes to see decommissioning start as soon as possible and, as the Mitchell Report said, during the talks.

### **Security**

The Government is committed to upholding democracy and the rule of law; violence and terrorism from whatever quarter will not succeed. We fully support the security forces, and will work with them to deal with the men of violence and to maximise support and confidence throughout the community.

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the murder and attempted murder of policemen, as we do all other acts of violence, intimidation and harassment. No effort will be spared in finding those responsible and bringing them to justice.

We urge restraint on those who might think of retaliation, and hope that calm will prevail.

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Security forces in Northern Ireland remain on high alert to deal with threat, from whatever source. Vigilance and skill of security forces continues to prevent terrorists from causing even greater misery and suffering.

### **Current issues lines**

#### Parades

We continue to believe that the way to reduce the tensions and difficulties surrounding parades is through dialogue and negotiation leading to accommodation at local level. This is not a question of denying anyone's rights but of reaching an acceptable balance. Everyone with any influence should use it for reconciliation, not confrontation.

The Government, the RUC and Parades Commission will do everything they can to prevent disorder and conflict and uphold the rule of law

If agreement cannot be reached, any protests must be peaceful and give no opportunity for extremists to exploit.

We will set up new and better arrangements for dealing with these disputes in future years. Our new approach will be based on the North Report. New legislation later this year will provide the basis. Our proposals will take account of the experience of this marching season and the views of all those involved.

#### Drumcree

This was a very sad day for Northern Ireland. The decision of the Chief Constable was the one which in his assessment would cause least risk to life and the preservation of peace. We fully support that decision.

### **Rights and Confidence Building**

This Government is committed to the fundamental principles of fairness and justice; there will be no second-class citizens. We are determined to see full respect for, and equality of, civil, political, social and cultural rights and freedom from discrimination

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for everyone. We are committed to building a society where the different identities are treated equally and enjoy mutual respect.

We will seek wherever possible initiatives to build confidence throughout the community and have announced a programme of specific measures including:- incorporation of ECHR; combating discrimination in labour market; implementation of North Report. We will also seek to increase confidence in the RUC through reform of structures and complaints system

These measures will threaten no-one and reflect sound principles which should underpin any fair minded society.

**Budget**

The extra money for Northern Ireland announced in the budget is excellent news. It will enable us to make a significant contribution to maintaining and improving the quality of education in our schools and sustaining the Health Service.

*(Signed)*

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