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PS/Secretary of State
8 July 1997

- cc: PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
- PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Steele
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Leach
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Brooker
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Woods
- Mr Clarke
- Mr Warner

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Handwritten notes:
 Mr. Brown
 Mr. Harvey
 Mr. Conroy
 C

Mr Perry

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MEETING WITH ORANGE ORDER

The Secretary of State met members of the Grand Orange Lodge in Stormont Castle last night for over an hour. They were represented by Robert Saulters, John McCrea, Dennis Watson (Armagh), Tom Reid (Tyrone) and Mervyn Bishop (Grand Treasurer). Mr Ingram, Mr Steele and I were also present.

2. The Secretary of State said she was grateful for the arrangements which were made for her to speak to Portadown District on Friday evening. She was prepared to do that again in relation to Lower Ormeau if that would be helpful. The situation at the moment was dire and she was quite prepared to go along and spell that out at any meeting. A repeat of the weekend would not be good for anyone, nor indeed for the future of Northern Ireland.

3. Mr Saulters said he did not know what could be done. Mr McCrea said he had moved to have all the "right to march" parades stopped. Challenged by Mr Steele as to whether these were just proposed as a threat if Drumcree did not go ahead, Mr McCrea protested that this was unfair. The marches were put in place 6 weeks ago to keep within the law and had also taken place last year. It was a gesture of goodwill that they had been cancelled, a move which was reported in this way in the Belfast Telegraph. He also suggested that No 10 District could go down the Lower Ormeau Road early in the morning and try to come home via a different route. However, he did not think this would take the trick with Gerard Rice this time.

4. The Secretary of State said it was not just Gerard Rice any more. The whole nationalist population was very angry and, while some of the residents groups were dominated or influenced by Sinn Fein, other people in these areas were

CONFIDENTIAL

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not but were now looking to the IRA for protection. The Secretary of State asked the group to think not about a 10 minute parade, but the effects of that in terms of days, weeks or years for the economy, jobs and public safety. Surely after Drumcree No 10 District could forego their march on the Lower Ormeau this year for the good of Ulster? After the events of the weekend the crowd on the Lower Ormeau could be very big indeed.

5. Mr Watson said he felt deeply hurt by the Secretary of State's public comments about intransigence on both sides, because the Orange Institution had done everything possible to have a disciplined parade on Sunday, with no violence and no actions by any Orangemen to provoke. He also said the Chief Constable's statement about the evil on both sides had been badly misinterpreted and thought to include the Orange Order. The Secretary of State said that she had never intended her comments to mean that Mr Watson was intransigent and she was quite prepared to acknowledge publicly that this was not the case. Indeed, both he and William Bingham had gone to extraordinary lengths to try to achieve an accommodation. What she meant in her statement was that the bottom lines of both sides had not changed whatsoever. Mr Watson accepted that but said that Harold Gracey would have been lynched if he had not walked the Garvaghy Road, such was the intense feeling in loyalist circles in regard to this parade.

6. Mr Reid agreed with a comment from Mr Ingram about the difficulty of getting people to invest in Northern Ireland now. But he contended that some members of the Orange Order and Unionists generally in Fermanagh and Tyrone would say that was a price they had to pay. The perception was that, until the paramilitaries were dealt with, there was little possibility of the Orange Institution going much further by way of generosity.

7. The Secretary of State said no-one could have been clearer than the Prime Minister in saying that there would be no united Ireland in his lifetime. Sinn Fein had been offered the best terms they could ever get if they were serious about coming into the Talks, but people should be under no illusions that the train would go on without them if they were not on board. The problem with Drumcree was that it had now given Sinn Fein a massive publicity coup and had probably provided a greater recruitment boost to them. That was why she wanted the Orange Order to show generosity, not weakness, for the good of Ulster.

8. Mr McCrea made the mistake of saying the Government should stop pandering to Sinn Fein and giving them chance after chance. The Secretary of State told him in no uncertain terms not to insult her or the Government. There

CONFIDENTIAL

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No question of Sinn Fein getting on the train for free, and no question of pandering to them either. If there was no unequivocal ceasefire, verified in word and deed, then the Government would go ahead without them and isolate them. But the reality was that their vote had gone up in recent times, the SDLP were not doing so well and there was a danger of the middle ground slipping. Mr McCrea apologised and said that he did not intend to be disrespectful.

9. Mr Reid made the point that in Tyrone and Fermanagh, where the Unionists were in a minority, they had been generous to a fault. There were two difficult venues coming up - Stewartstown and Dromore - where he hoped local accommodations would hold. In Pomeroy and Newtownbutler the Orangemen had walked away from confrontation at the weekend. He said it should be recognised that the Orange Order were in a new situation since the Residents Groups, influenced by Sinn Fein, were established and the Orange Order had to adjust to this. Asked by the Secretary of State if the Government should publicly acknowledge the sort of accommodations that had been reached in Fermanagh and Tyrone, Mr Reid emphatically said no. What he suggested should be done was for Ministers to come along quietly, meet people and encourage them in that way. The Secretary of State agreed to do so.

10. Summing up, the Secretary of State again thanked Dennis Watson (and Mr Bingham) for their efforts in trying to reach an accommodation over Drumcree. The Orange Order at the highest level had been helpful and willing to talk, whereas the Garvaghy residents were not prepared to move at all. She said she would leave the Lower Ormeau situation to Mr Saulters, who was meeting Belfast Grand Masters later in the evening, and hoped that No 10 District would be able to do something to put Sinn Fein in a corner. Mr Steele said that the parade in Derry would probably meet massive opposition, particularly to it crossing the bridge, and suggested that they might think of going to Coleraine instead. Mr McCrea said they would have to take soundings on that but clearly Sinn Fein would be putting a major thrust into both Derry and Belfast at the weekend. The Secretary of State agreed to assess the situation further and keep in touch with Mr Saulters. A straightforward press line was agreed and the meeting ended at 7.40 pm.

Ken Lindsay

W K LINDSAY
PS/Secretary of State

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