



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2016/52/36
Creation Dates:	10 July 1986
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

SECRET

19629

S19629.

✓ hms

Meeting with Dr. Robin Eames, Archbishop of Armagh,
10 July, 1986.

I had a meeting with Archbishop Eames in his residence in Armagh yesterday.

The following is a summary of our discussion of the forthcoming Portadown marches.

The Archbishop has been involved in an attempt to find what he terms a "compromise" solution. By this he means a formula which will defuse local Orange resentments, particularly towards the police, and make local Orangemen, accordingly, less susceptible to Paisley's negative influence.

His idea is that the eight country lodges from the Drumcree area (who would arrive from west of the town and would ordinarily walk from Obins Street to the main assembly point) should be permitted to walk down the street - "or something very close to it" - at a very early hour on Saturday morning (five or six a.m.). They would carry their banners, but there would be no accompanying music. In place of the standard Orange parade scheduled to take place later in the morning, there would be what Eames described as a "small protest meeting" elsewhere in the town, at which Orangemen would be allowed to vent briefly their grievances about the RUC, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, etc. The local lodges would then set off for Armagh to take part in the main Orange parade there.

Eames hopes that this plan, if agreed by all parties, would enable the local lodges to save face and would, therefore, drive a firm wedge between them and Paisley's "rabble". The Orangemen would be allowed to walk ("not march") up Obins Street ("or somewhere close by") early in the morning and subsequently to "let off some steam" in a controlled fashion. In exchange, they would agree to take part in the Armagh parade rather than to hold their usual march in Portadown.

I recalled the assurance given publicly by the RUC on 4 July that Orangemen would not be allowed to parade through Obins Street on 12 July and told Eames that, in my view, the departure from this which he clearly envisaged would be totally unacceptable to nationalists. Eames replied by stressing the need for "compromise" and for a face-saving device which would respect the sensitivities of local Orangemen. He said, however, that he had put to a senior Orange Order official (who was leaving the residence as I arrived) a suggestion (not disclosed to me) for an alternative route "very close to" Obins Street. The official had undertaken to reflect on this. Some hours after my own departure, Eames was due to receive a visit from Sir Jack Hermon, who had been receptive to the Archbishop's idea during a long session on the previous evening and had undertaken to come back to him on it. Hermon would be followed by Harold McCusker, whose support for the plan and for the general cause of moderation in Portadown the Archbishop hoped to enlist ("it is time for him to stand up and be counted").

During our conversation, Eames made it clear that a major purpose of his plan, apart from the obvious one of reducing risk to lives, is to isolate "ordinary, decent Orangemen" from Paisley, for whom he has undisguised hostility. He understands that the DUP leader is toying with at least three different scenarios:

- he will assemble his supporters at the exit from the motorway and hold a rally there, without actually entering the town;
- he will have his supporters converge on the entrance to Obins Street from four assembly points on the outskirts of the town;
- he will have his supporters actually infiltrate the Orange parade and engage in open confrontation with the police.

Eames admitted frankly that, in order to hasten the inevitable split between the OUP and the DUP, he would not mind too much

if Paisley tried to "take on" the police. From his contacts with Hermon, he is certain that the RUC is ready, and willing, to take on Paisley and his supporters if the need arises. (The Chief Constable has told him that he is bringing in "enormous reinforcements" to Portadown, "including even pen-pushers", and that, apart from the Army and the UDR, consideration has also been given to holding the Territorial Army in reserve). His main concern is that ordinary local Orangemen should not be caught up in any violence which breaks out between the Paisleyites and the RUC.

When I pointed out to him that the early-morning 'walk' by the local lodges down Obins Street is eminently capable of being taken over by Paisley and his supporters, the Archbishop conceded this point and admitted glumly that he is not certain that his plan will succeed. He fears also that, even if the RUC agrees to it, some individual police officers may "in a rash moment" do something which would antagonize Orangemen and strengthen Paisley's hand.

In the course of our conversation, the Archbishop asked me for an indication of our own view of the situation and also enquired about local SDLP views.

David Donoghue

David Donoghue

11 July, 1986.

cc: Taoiseach
Minister
Minister for Justice
Secretary
Mr. Nally,
Mr. Ward
Mr. Lillis
A-I Section
Ambassador London