



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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**Confidential**

**Meeting between the Tánaiste and Northern Ireland Residents Groups**

**Government Buildings, 26 February 1997**

1. The Tánaiste, accompanied by Dan Mulhall, Eamonn McKee and the undersigned, met with a delegation from Northern Ireland residents groups on 26 February 1997. The primary purpose of the meeting was to discuss their reaction to the North Review and to assess the prospects for this year's marching season. The groups represented and their delegates were as follows:

Garvaghy Road                      Breandán MacCionnaith  
Fr. Eamon Stack, SJ

Lower Ormeau Road                John Gormley  
Gerard Rice

Bogside Residents Group        Donncha MacNiallais  
Donncha MacFichealligh  
Caoimhín Ó Murchú

Bellaghy                              Jim Hassan  
Jim Reid

2. The Tánaiste began by welcoming the opportunity to meet with the group and to hear their views on the North Report and the current situation on the ground. He stressed the need to avoid a repetition of the events of last year. Hearing the group's views at first hand would help the Government in terms of its own work on the parades issue; it was due to be discussed at the forthcoming Anglo-Irish Conference.

**North Report**

3. **Mr. Gormley** said that the group had put together a document outlining their current position, which he handed over at the conclusion of the meeting. He said that the residents had had a similar reaction to the North Report as the Government. They welcomed the Report and believed it was a useful contribution to the parades debate. He said that the residents groups did not fear the concept of a truly independent tribunal to deal with the issue. Their reservations with regard to the Report were summarised under five heads:

- Firstly, the Report lacked an explicit statement of the rights of local communities in the context of the rights accorded to marchers.
- Secondly, the Report enabled the RUC to overturn decisions made by the Parades

Commission. Gormley said that if the North Report had been implemented prior to the 1996 marching season, Drumcree would have unfolded in exactly the same way, except, to quote Cllr. Bríd Rodgers, there would have been an extra layer of bureaucracy.

- Thirdly, the North Report failed to take account of nationalist attitudes towards the RUC. Nationalists have no confidence in the RUC and are very keen to have the RUC replaced by an acceptable police service. There should be a short-term provision for an international police presence at contentious parades. Monitors and observers were very useful in restraining the worst excesses of the RUC. They were also useful in providing authoritative accounts of events.
- Fourthly, the mechanisms proposed made no provision for appealing Commission decisions.
- Fifthly, he said they had profound doubts about the role of the Secretary of State. Mayhew had reacted in a very unprincipled and opportunistic way to the North Report in effectively shelving it and they had no confidence in the British Government's handling of the parades issue.

4. **Gormley** went on to say that certain nuances in the report require an "honest approach to implementation". He said that the Secretary of State, in proceeding to nominate individuals to the Parades Commission, would not gain the confidence of nationalists in the Commission. He said that the North Report has the potential to help to resolve the parades issue, once it provided confidence that it rested on a strong basis of natural justice.
5. The **Tánaiste** said that the Government broadly welcomed the proposals of the North Report, but likewise had reservations. These reservations include the power of the Secretary of State to overturn the Commission's decisions, the right of the Chief Constable to petition the Secretary of State with regard to decisions, and also the question of the autonomy of the chief RUC officer on the ground. He said these matters would be matters for discussion with the British Government. He pointed to the effect which the impending British general election was having on the issue. He said that timing was very crucial at this stage. He agreed with Gormley that there was nothing to fear from a Parades Commission.
6. **Fr.Stack** said that he would like to see a cross-party solidity on the issue both here and in the United Kingdom. He said a Commission would be a guarantor for this.

#### **Lower Ormeau Road**

7. **Gormley** said that all those in attendance had their own vision for their own particular area. He said that the LOCC had written to the Orange Order on many recent occasions but had yet to receive an acknowledgement. He said that Gerard Rice had spoken with Brendan McAllister of Mediation Network yesterday (25 February) and that Mediation Network confirmed that they had had no contact from the Orange Order since last

October regarding the Ormeau Road.

8. The **Tánaiste** mentioned that the recent comments by UUP leader, David Trimble had been unhelpful. **Gormley** said that as the marching season approached the Orange Order was coming under pressure. When this happens, the Order feels the need to point to claims that there are contacts and mediation taking place behind the scenes. He said that mediation was used simply as a smokescreen.
9. **Rice** said that the LOCC had in the past talked to the local Ballinafeigh Lodge and also to the Secretary of State. He pointed to other forces in the person of Pauline Gilmore, founder of ORDER, (Orange Residents Demand Equal Rights) and believed to be close to the UDA. He said that Brendan McAllister (Mediation Network) had made clear last year that mediation was a ten year process. The local Orange Order entered into mediation at District and County level last year and undertook that talks would continue following 12 July. However, there has not been any contact from the Lodge since. **Rice** concluded that all the Lodge wanted was to ensure that the 12 July parade went ahead.
10. The **Tánaiste** asked about the prospects for the first march of the year on the Lower Ormeau at Easter. Was it likely to be rerouted as had previously happened? **Gormley** said that there had never been any communication from the Apprentice Boys with regard to the parade due on 31 March. He does not anticipate any change this year. He said that he wrote to the Apprentice Boys last December and again that day. **Rice** mentioned the 26 hour curfew which took place last year on the Lower Ormeau Road. He called for TD's to act as observers.

### **Bellaghy**

11. Mr. **Hassan** said that the Bellaghy residents had held talks with the Royal Black Preceptory last year and that a one-off agreement was reached. The **Tánaiste** asked whether they had sought meetings with the Black Preceptory this year. **Hassan** said that the only response they had gained this year had been by way of accusations made through the media. The residents had no objection to marches to the local Church of Ireland chapel but that the preferred route of the local Order was to continue on to the Roman Catholic Church and then u-turn to the Orange Hall and back again. The **Tánaiste** asked whether this longer route had been taken last year. **Hassan** replied that this happened following a lengthy stand off. He said that the RUC routinely blocks off the centre of the village, preventing commuters from driving through to get home. His own home is regularly blocked off also in the context of marches.
12. **Hassan** said that observers from the Committee on the Administration of Justice had been present in Bellaghy last year. The RUC had still attacked residents. He said that a funeral of two hunger strikers in the village in 1981 had been rerouted because of the opposition of 20 Protestant families in the village, but that the views of the majority in Bellaghy does not seem to merit rerouting.
13. **Hassan** said that unionists question residents groups "springing" up in so many areas. He pointed to the large increase in the number of parades in Bellaghy in recent years as an example of the cause of this. **Gormley** said that there is strong circumstantial

evidence that entirely unionist and Protestant villages were being avoided by the Orange Order as parades venues. He pointed to the proximity of the Protestant village of Cloughmills to Dunloy. There is only one parades per year in the former and eleven in the latter. He said this is a phenomenon in many other nationalist villages. He said there is an element within Orangeism which seeks to provoke.

### Garvaghy Road

14. **MacCionnaith** said that a survey carried out had shown that not one nationalist on the Garvaghy Road wanted a march to take place on the road. He said that Trimble had made clear that he was prepared for confrontation this year. The RUC were not prepared to stand up to the Orangemen last year and had turned their "guns and batons" on the residents. The stand off this year could last for up to two weeks. The Garvaghy Residents Coalition had been trying to establish from the Secretary of State what exactly had happened last year at Drumcree. Last January they met with Sir Patrick Mayhew and left 11 questions with him. The Secretary of State had failed to respond. The questions focussed on when the decision to allow the march through the Garvaghy Road had been taken.
15. He said they had reason to believe it had not been taken by the Chief Constable on the Thursday morning but rather on the Wednesday night (10 July). He wondered whether the decision was taken by Sir Hugh Annesley or by the Secretary of State. He pointed to the meeting which had taken place with official from the NIO on the Wednesday when they had reportedly made clear that they wanted Orangemen on the Garvaghy Road. (**MacCionnaith** offered copies of the minutes of this meeting). He said it is obvious that the British Government does not care what happens and nor does the Secretary of State care what happens in Portadown.
16. **Stack** interjected that the situation in Portadown had now been going on for 25 years and that to force a march down the Garvaghy Road required a major military style operation. He said that the resentment which this had engendered would be difficult to undo. The behaviour of the marchers would shock people in the south and pointed to the UVF activists who had accompanied marchers along the route in the past. He said that the current public order legislation is a "knife-edge". In the Portadown case, he believed that the law comes down in favour of the nationalist community since in recent years they have organised a community festival to coincide with the Drumcree march. This is permitted under the terms of the Public Order Order.
17. **Stack** said that, as Portadown is a predominantly Orange town, the issue should be seen as one of minority ethnic rights. He said that there are now 42 parades in Portadown annually, that the Garvaghy residents are not being treated as equal citizens and that there is no question of nationalists celebrating their culture in Portadown. The town is off limits to nationalists at night. Catholic have a rate of unemployment four times greater than their Protestant neighbours. **Stack** asked that international observers should be brought in to see and acknowledge the grave injustice which occurs. He said that Unionists misconstrued the issue as one of extreme Republicans undermining Protestant culture.

18. The **Tánaiste** asked whether the group thought that the comments of Orange Order Grandmaster, Robert Saulters, earlier in the day represented a move towards dialogue, though he understood that the power of initiative really lay with local lodges rather than the higher levels of the Orange Order.
19. **MacCionnaith** replied that at an Orange Order meeting last month it was decided that under no circumstances would they meet with the Garvaghy Residents Coalition. He said that a meeting with the Portadown District Lodge is what is needed; meetings could take place at local or County level but that these were effectively of no use. He claimed that the Portadown District Master had held twelve meetings with Billy Wright during Drumcree last year. The District Master had also accompanied UVF and UDA activists through Obins Street in Portadown on marches in the past. He mentioned the Spirit of Drumcree group which has strong Orange support and compared it with the Ulster Clubs of the 1980s.
20. The **Tánaiste** asked when was the first confrontation in Portadown this year likely to occur. **MacCionnaith** replied that this would happen on 6 July when the parades began. **Stack** said that there is a difference between right-wing unionists and centre unionists. He said it could prove possible to talk with the centre unionists. Right-wing loyalists are represented by the likes of Billy Wright. Right-wing unionism is represented by Trimble and Paisley. There are also right-wing fundamentalists involved.
21. **Stack** said, with regard to Drumcree this year, that agreement could be reached but he was not hopeful and time is running out. He said there is now grave concern of a repeat of last year's events. He said the whole of unionism is projecting their grievances with regard to the Anglo-Irish Agreement etc. onto Drumcree. He forcefully made the point that the residents of the Garvaghy Road should not be expected to sort out the whole history of the conflict on 6 July 1997. He said that they were amateurs and that the Orangemen could have nothing to lose by letting the situation degenerate, possibly into war. He said there was an tendency from outside to say that the issue could be sorted out locally, that it is a community problem.

### Derry

22. **MacNiallais** said that there would have been agreement in Derry in 1996 but for the events at Drumcree. He said he is hopeful that the debate can be reinitiated this year but was fearful of what impact events on the Garvaghy Road would have on the mood in Derry.
23. **MacFichealligh** asked the **Tánaiste** whether he had received representations from local traders in Derry following the "Burning of Lundy" celebrations on 14 December last. He pointed to a large degree of anger at the behaviour of the Loyal Orders. The **Tánaiste** said that there had not been direct consultation but that soundings had been taken.


### Mediators

24. On a number of occasions, **Rice** called for observers from the Government. **Gormley** said that when SDLP Councillor Martin Morgan attended the Ormeau Road parade on

12 July 1996 he was attacked by the RUC as he approached their lines. Labour TD Joe Costello intervened but did not carry any weight either and had to seek out a senior officer to defuse the matter. The **Tánaiste** said that it was something that could be considered and that the presence of MEPs and TDs had worked well in the past. The point was also made that it had not been the practice in the past to send government observers and that the Government would consider the issue carefully to ensure that it would prove helpful.

### Mediation and the Orange Order

25. **Gormley** wondered himself to what extent Saulter is genuine. He reiterated that they knew from Mediation Network that there had been no contact with the Orange Order since last October. He said that Saulters had Harryville, Portadown, mid-Ulster (presumably the renegade UVF members) and the Spirit of Drumcree elements to deal with. He wondered to what extent Saulters could be in control as a result. He said he also has Trimble to deal with. The **Tánaiste** offered that if the power rests with the local order than Saulters can effectively say what he likes. **Gormley** said that sometimes the Grand Orange Lodge can talk but that nothing meaningful ever seems to result.
26. The **Tánaiste** asked **McKee** whether the Government have any official level access to the Orange Order. **McKee** replied that officials were in touch with the Orange Order and UUP members through peripheral figures who would be of a more liberal bent. He said that Saulters does reflect the thinking of many who do not wish to take things to the brink. However, there remain the likes of Harold Gracey, head of the Portadown Lodge, who are set in their ways and find it difficult to enter negotiations. But those willing to talk to us would be centre-unionists, by **Stack's** criteria. The value of an independent parades commission lay in its availability to talk to groups who refuse to engage in direct talks. With regard to mediation as a smokescreen, he confirmed that mediation was something the Government supported as a necessary long term investment.
27. The **Tánaiste** said that the unionists were reacting to a fear of the unknown and that it is understandable that they would assume that the residents were trying to undermine their traditions. He said that they should be allowed express their views as long as the residents could also express theirs. **Gormley** said he appreciated this. He said that of the 3,000 plus parades annually, residents only seek to have around 20 rerouted.
28. The **Tánaiste** thanked the group for meeting him and for setting out their views. This would be very helpful in the context of forthcoming meetings on the parades issue.



Ciara O'Brien  
Security Section  
27 February 1997

ConfidentialConversation with Fr. Eamon Stack, Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition24 February 1997

I spoke with Fr. Eamon Stack regarding the current views of the residents of the Garvaghy Road and points likely to arise in the course of the forthcoming meeting between the Tánaiste and representatives of the four main resident groups (Ormeau Road, Derry and Dunloy being the others). Stack is closely involved with the community (and has been identified publicly with the marching issue. The confrontation of last year weighed heavily on him personally, particularly the death of Michael McGoldrick, widely believed to have been killed by the local (and renegade mid-Ulster UVF). That said, he did reflect a more widespread feeling within the community that the marching issue was not worth a life. The death of McGoldrick and later of young Darren Murray who died when hit by a van as he fled from sectarian taunting have brought his point forcefully home. Though he declares himself an optimist, he is very aware of the potential for this issue to result again in massive disruption, violence, injury and death. The following points of interest arose:

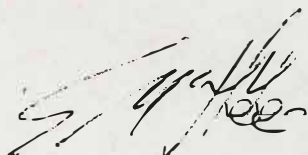
1. There was obviously grave concern about the march this summer, generated not least by signals from various sources "on the other side" about what was planned. Rumours are circulating locally that those associated with the march are taking measures to ensure that they can march down the road. These range from stocking up food for a prolonged siege to planning to kill a large number of Catholics ("more McGoldricks"). Another rumour circulating is that the marchers and their supporters are planning a mass rally on the first day with the intention of getting down the road as quickly as possible. Whatever about the basis of these speculations, they at least point to the depth of anxiety and fear (summarised if not personalised by UVF dissident Billy Wright) on the Garvaghy Road that, in Stack's words, "all the forces are re-aligning" again. Stack's contacts with the other side have conveyed some of these scenarios to him, though the contacts have rejected the term "threat" (used by Stack to describe them) in favour of "political reality".
2. Stack said that the widely reported remarks by David Trimble that the march should go down the Garvaghy Road had shocked the local community on the Garvaghy Road. Stack said that the tenor and tone of the remarks had failed completely to take account of the "new language" which was evident, including in the North Report and in the comments of the Orange Order leadership. This language emphasised civil and religious liberty *for all* i.e. not as a Protestant privilege. He said that the residents had dropped the term "consent" and were not employing the phrase "equal citizenship" specifically to allow for more flexibility and a less confrontational approach.



3. Stack was at pains to say that those on the ground in Garvaghy, including the Coalition, cannot take responsibility for Drumcree and the implications of its wider impact, including on the peace process. "We're just amateurs", he said a number of times, and signalled his belief that it was beyond the remit of the community group to resolve so loaded and far reaching an issue as Drumcree. He believed that there was a need to involve hardened professional mediators and negotiations who has been through tough situations before. He dismissed the intervention of other amateurs (he appeared to include Archbishop Eames in this - "we've no idea what he's up to") or mediators who had tried and failed in the past (he dismissed Mediation Network in the same breath as he referred to "do-gooders"). He wondered whether the Government could be of assistance on this i.e. locating and proposing an appropriate group of mediators from Ireland, Britain or the U.S. I said that the Government had set out its position on this aspect in its response to the North Report - that mediation had a role to play in an integrated process of dialogue and arbitration by an independent body.
4. Stack and the Garvaghy Coalition had noted press reports that there was internal discussions within the Orange Order about how to proceed. The Coalition were "waiting" rather than hopeful of a meeting with the Orange Order. When I asked to what extent a meeting with the Order would be a significant breakthrough, he agreed in a very neutral manner, saying that it would represent progress.
5. He believed there was 9 weeks of "clear weather" left in which to work towards an agreement before the atmosphere would become too turbulent. That said, he reported that both Mo Mowlam and John Alderdice had conveyed their view to the Coalition when they had met them recently that there was little or no hope of local agreement. Stack said that he personally disagreed but added that he was more of an optimist (though I felt that he sounded less than convincing on this).
6. Stack said that the fact of forthcoming elections and of new Governments taking office in the near future had to be taken into account in managing the march. Emphasising that he was speaking purely personally, not to say speculatively, he said that this *might* mean that people on the Garvaghy Road *might* be encouraged to focus on 1998 and that, consequently they *might* prove more open towards an accommodation in 1997. This would only happen if there were absolutely solid, cast iron guarantees on the part of both Governments about how 1998 would be managed e.g that the North Commission would be fully and satisfactorily established and underway in good time (almost a year) to deal with the 1998 marching season.

Comment

7. Stack's last point should be taken only as an indication of his personal desire - perhaps verging on desperation - to defuse a possibly fatal repeat of last year's confrontation. His influence on the Garvaghy is, I suspect, very limited. He has in the past been more open to accommodation but has not been able to assert his ideas in the face of either more dominant hardline personalities or in the knowledge that the local community itself finds accommodation increasingly unpalatable since Drumcree 1995 and indeed inconceivable in the absence of some movement by the Orange Order (such as agreeing to a meetin with the residents). It should also be remembered that the residents of the Garvaghy Road are very conscious that their decisions and actions are made under the eyes of the nationalist community and, for July at least, the world's media. This would tend to inhibit a more flexible approach based on accommodation unless and until it accorded with the views of the wider nationalist community and its leaders. Whatever Stack may wish to believe possible, the current reality remains that there is already an alignment of the forces which produced Drumcree 1996.



Eamonn McKee  
Security Section  
24 February 1997

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Counsellors A-I Section  
Messers. Teahon, Donlon, Dalton  
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Joint Secretary

*BoC*

Confidential

Dunloy - Conversation with Brendan McAllister, Mediation Network


27 February 1997

In the course of a number of conversations with the above, the following points of interest emerged:

1. He has managed to construct a confidential mediation process involving the Orange Order in Antrim and the residents of Dunloy. This process has the following limiting features;
  - It does not involve the local Dunloy Orange Lodge: those who are engaged on the Orange side are officers from the District and County levels who have the blessing of the Grand Master of the Order, Robert Saulters.
  - It does not involve direct contact between the residents and the Orange Order: each side meets with McAllister separately on the same evening.
  - Its objective is not negotiation: it is rather a mediative process designed to encourage each side to recognise the true as opposed to perceived character of the other and their response to the problem of parades. Even this limited approach to the parade issue has had to be diluted at the insistence of the Orange Order to the more vague objective of enhancing mutual understanding.
2. McAllister hopes that this process will help create a context in which the local lodge will be encouraged to address the problem in a more flexible way. On the one hand, the involvement of senior district and county officers helps legitimise mediation. On the other, the contact with residents - albeit through an interlocutor - helps dissipate the notion that the Dunloy group is the product of a republican conspiracy. He is less concerned about the absence of the local Lodge if only because he believes that it is incapable at this stage of making any progress in conjunction with the residents. He likened the Lodge members to the last men standing at the Alamo sharing the remaining ammunition before they fell. (At any rate, locals in Dunloy believe that the Lodge has been hijacked by hardline DUP supporters.)
3. McAllister's diffidence about the contribution of the local Lodge is telling: if the local Orange members cannot engage in even indirect contact with residents on such a vague agenda as mutual understanding, the possibility of local agreement in the short term is hardly likely. It must be said that the mediative process sounds like counselling between warring spouses: it is hard to image rural protestant folk indulging in it to save marriages much less appreciate the qualities of the natives of Dunloy.
4. Because this process is at an embryonic stage, given the sensitivities on the Orange side, and the fact that the process is governed by a number of rules including absolute confidentiality, the Dunloy Residents asked to postpone their meeting with the Tánaiste. This was a measure of the depth of their commitment to exploring all options to resolve

the local parades problem - even an option which they find frustrating because of the failure of the local Lodge to engage.

5. Equally, it demonstrates the independence of the Dunloy group from other resident groups, particularly the Lower Ormeau and Garvaghy groups. The Dunloy residents did not react kindly to a visit earlier this week from Gerry Rice and John Gormley of the LOCC. Gormley and Rice were sceptical of the mediative process and apparently regard it as an Orange smokescreen to hide their resistance to any and all dialogue. (It was noticeable too the Bellaghy representatives at the meeting with the Tánaiste similarly insisted on the particular nature of the parade issue in their village which made it distinct from the Garvaghy and Ormeau Roads.)
6. The attack by Joel Patten of the Spirit of Drumcree group on Robert Saulters (see *Belfast Telegraph* of 27 February attached) has had an enormous impact within the Orange Order, according to McAllister. He has tried to calm his Orange contacts and convince them to remain engaged in the mediative process: he hopes it will bear fruit (significantly in allowing a march to proceed in Dunloy) and thereby confirm the wisdom of Saulter's leadership on the question of mediation. If the Orange Order at its more senior levels does resile from mediation under the pressure of such intimidatory tactics, it will be a clear indication of the power of the Spirit of Drumcree and other hardline elements to set the Orange agenda.
7. Patten's attack so early in the year and in response to what most would regard as a reasonable comment by Saulters (though the real object of Patten's attack was, one could guess, the possibility of mediation becoming acceptable) is a sobering indication of the alignment of forces on the Orange side. In this context, McAllister's painfully created mediative process in Dunloy looks pathetically fragile and irrelevant.
8. Arguably, the notion that a mediative process which is not backed up by the force of arbitration and determination, can succeed is doomed to fail since it seeks to rely on solely on the reasonableness and generosity of each side, qualities that are depressingly absent. The experiences of 1995 and 1996 seemed to have confirmed for both sides that entrenchment and force, if successfully used against the authorities, will prevail. The question this year is less about drawing up battle lines (they were definitively established last year) and more about preparing the ground for a showdown. Perhaps the last defence against such a showdown is the very prospect of another summer of disorder, summed by Saulter's comment on Thursday that "we would be doing the game of the Sinn Féin/IRA's business and destroying the Province....the whole fibre of society in Northern Ireland. I certainly wouldn't want a repeat of last year." From the unionist perspective, Saulter's success in avoiding a repetition of last year depends on the attitude of local lodges in general and the Loyal Orange Lodge of Portadown in particular.

  
Eamonn McKee  
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28 February 1997

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