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OIFIG AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

cc: Secretary
Mr. Collins
Mr. Nally, DOT
Box.

SECRET AND PERSONAL

3 July 1987.

(See by Mr O Tuathail)

Rt. Hon Tom King,
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

Dear Tom,

I would like to convey to you concerns which the Government have in relation to parades and other forthcoming events in Northern Ireland. Our immediate preoccupation is the sequence of traditional events in Portadown over the next fortnight. However, the views which I am expressing on the Government's behalf apply equally to all parades and events due to take place this summer.

I understand that decisions on parade routes are an operational matter for the police and I recognise the difficulty of the decisions which are facing the Chief Constable and his senior officers. I believe you and the Chief Constable will agree, however, that police decisions on these matters can have a very important bearing on the overall security situation and on relations between the security forces and the community. You will understand, therefore, why I should write to you personally in relation to this year's marching season.

There is, first, the triumphalism or provocation evident in a number of parades. I do not, of course, dispute the traditional right of people in either community to demonstrate peacefully. I think, however, that the essential standard for determining the route of a proposed parade, or the desirability of its taking place at all, should be the parade's acceptability, or otherwise, to a clear majority of the people living in the area or areas through which it passes. I think you yourself expressed the point best in the question you posed to the House of Commons on 19 June last year, "How does it benefit anyone to march through an area where the inhabitants do not support the views being expressed by the marchers and where the only result is to exacerbate communal tensions?"

In our view, where a parade passes through an area where it is clearly not welcome and where its unacceptability has been demonstrated, it should be rerouted or, if necessary, banned.

Secondly, there are the assaults and acts of intimidation which are part and parcel of some parades, marches, meetings and their aftermath. I urge that the powers available to the security forces, including those under the new Public Order Order, should be used as may be necessary to prevent violence and to ensure full protection for lives and property during this difficult period. In this respect, there are flashpoint areas of specific concern to nationalists which I have asked to be brought to attention in the Secretariat.

May I say that I fully appreciate the need for sensitivity in regard to the majority community at present. Your concerns in this respect have been reported to me through the Secretariat. I have to say, however, that nationalists feel generational bitterness about provocative parades, marches and other events in their areas. They have been the source of a very great deal of the trouble of recent times and, indeed, one particular march (the Derry Apprentice Boys) marked the first serious escalation of the present phase of violence in the late 1960s.

Yours sincerely,

Brian Lenihan

Brian Lenihan, T.D.,
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

*Text transmitted by teler for communication to Mr King
today.*

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