



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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West Belfast

Meeting with Brian Feeney, Belfast, 17 May 1988

1. He has been very involved in the aftermath of the recent sectarian assassinations in North Belfast which have generated an extremely tense atmosphere in the area. His own information is that the shooting at the Avenue bar was the work of some young tigers in the UVF who were dissatisfied with the lack of action and that the UVF leadership, who appeared to be unable to control this younger element, had not endorsed the operation. The assassination itself appears to have had a certain amateurish aspect. The gunmen apparently began the operation from the Mallary Bar, on Boundary Street off the Shankill Road. From there they ordered a taxi and had a drink while they waited for it to arrive. When it arrived it was hijacked, guns were collected and the job was carried out and the taxi returned to the Shankill Road area. Feeney felt that with this kind of pattern too many people would have seen too much. One way or the other, he thought it very likely that the IRA would hit back and felt that they would be under considerable pressure to do so from the Catholic community. Feeling is running high and people are expecting a rash of sectarian attacks and, in that situation, he is convinced that the IRA will be obliged to hit back - probably against leading loyalist militants.
  
2. Feeney expressed his strong concern at the proposal that the Royal Irish Rangers serve a tour of duty in Northern Ireland. He is convinced that the NIO deliberately leaked this story in order to "fly a kite" and gauge public reaction. He mentioned that he had just come from a programme on Radio Ulster, with Rev. William McCrea of the DUP, which had discussed this issue. McCrea, as one might expect, had no objection to the idea. Feeney had pointed out that traditionally members of the Royal Irish Rangers at home on leave had not been considered as targets. The last

3

one to be killed was Ranger Best which was back in the early '70s. By involving the Regiment in Northern Ireland, its members would now become targets when on home leave. After the show he checked the phone-in reactions to the programme which showed that his (rather than McCrea's) sentiments were shared by a large number of loyalist families with members serving in the RIR.

3. Work on a special programme for West Belfast is continuing and he had scheduled a meeting for later in the week with statisticians at Stormont with a view to their compiling a detailed statistical profile of the area. He is convinced that the NIO is serious about "doing something for West Belfast" but he is not sure just how far they will go in this. He himself is keen on the establishment of a special authority - similar to Laganaside, though Ken Bloomfield is opposed to such an initiative. Laganaside envisages a £300m investment over a five year period and will be a "market led" initiative. He feels that in West Belfast any initiative must of necessity be "Government led" rather than "market led".
  
4. He mentioned the question of indirect discrimination in relation to the forthcoming changes in fair employment legislation. He seemed particularly concerned that an industrial tribunal format might prove more legalistic than the FEA in tackling such indirect discrimination. He instanced the case of the display of flags and emblems at Mackies factory. The FEA were quite prepared to take action on this and Mackies had originally planned to challenge the FEA in court. In the event, Mackies backed off from a court action. He speculated as to whether a court or tribunal could, in legal terms, find "a display of the national flag and emblem" as constituting a form of employment discrimination?

5. He was critical of Shorts' attempts at employment creation in the old De Lorean plant at Dunmurray where his understanding is that less than 80 people were eventually employed and, while described as manufacturing aircraft components, were in fact simply moulding plastic doors for the food compartments of the planes. His information is that the workers at Shorts had made it clear to the management that they would black any engineering components manufactured at Dunmurray.

*B.M. 7.7.88*

Brendan McMahon

Anglo-Irish Division

20 May 1988

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