

Subject:- Proposed Demonstration organised by the Civil Rights Association of Northern Ireland on Saturday, 24th August, 1968, in Dungannon

District Inspector's Office,
Crime Special,
R.U.C.,
DUNGANNON.

Ref. No. TCS.2/1/5(10)68

28th August, 1968.

Inspector General

Submitted.

Reference my reports (T.C.S.2/1/5(10)68) dated 19th and 20th instant relative to above subject I have to report that on Wednesday, 21st instant, I again met a deputation representing the Civil Rights Association and consisting of -

- (1) Edward Michael McLoughlin, 75 Donaghmore Road, Dungannon.
- (2) John Donaghy, Donaghmore Road, Dungannon.
- (3) Jack Hassard, Drumglass Way, Dungannon.

At this meeting Mr. McLoughlin handed to me a Form 11/1 setting out details of the proposed march and meeting. I told this deputation that my views on the route of the march had not changed and again suggested to them the alternative route, this was unacceptable by them.

On the afternoon of the 21st instant, I attended a conference in Belfast at the home of the Rt. Hon. William Craig, Minister of Home Affairs. This was attended by the Inspector General, County Inspector Landale, Tyrone, District Inspector Kerr, Headquarters, and Mr. Hill (Ministry of Home Affairs) where a decision was taken that the march be re-routed under Section 2 of the Public Order Act (N.I.) 1951 via Quarry Lane, Donaghmore Road and Ann Street where the meeting could be held.

On the night of Friday, 23rd instant, I went accompanied by Head Constable Hyndman and D/Sergeant McCrum to the house of Mr. Jack Hassard and the Head Constable served a copy of a written notice under Section 2 of Public Order Act (N.I.) 1951. Immediately after this we went by arrangement to the home of Mr. Austin Currie, M.P., and there served copies of the Order upon him, upon Mr. Edward Michael McLoughlin and Mr. John Donaghy who were holding a meeting with Mr. Currie. When the Orders were served Mr. Currie asked me would the police be prepared to allow the march to enter The Square with possible prosecutions afterwards for breach of the Public Order Act. I told him that the police would prevent, as far as possible, any attempt to enter The Square, purely in the interests of preserving the peace. Mr. Currie protested strongly at the late hour of the service of the Order and stated that it was a denial of their fundamental rights of protest.

I asked Messrs. Currie, McLoughlin and Donaghy if they could give me an undertaking that they would use no physical resistance to the police enforcing the order, none of them would give me that undertaking.

The situation on Friday night then was that written Orders had been served on Mr. Currie, Mr. McLoughlin and Mr. Donaghy and Hassard but we had no information of the methods to be adopted by the march the following day.

At 6.30 p.m. on Saturday, the 24th instant, I went to Coalisland and there met County Inspector Landale, a large crowd had gathered and the march was being marshalled by Brian Quinn, Derrylaughan, Coalisland - a noted Republican and recorded in Crime Special records and who was operating a loud speaker fitted to the cab of a motor lorry supplied by a firm "McIlkenny" Coal Suppliers, Main Street, Coalisland, he was being assisted by a large number of marshals who wore an orange paper armband without lettering.

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As the marchers were forming up it was my intention to serve further notices under the Public Order Act but I considered that such action was inadvisable due to the large crowd who were evidently hostile to the police.

The marchers were preceded by a banner bearing the words "Civil Rights March" numerous placards were carried bearing slogans "O'Neill P.E.P. pills", "Ban O'Neill's Civic Weeks", "Justice for all", "Discrimination in Housing and Jobs", "Derry Housing Action Committee", "Young Socialists Belfast", "Omagh Housing Committee". Five Bands took part:-

- (1) Coalisland Silver Band (Nationalist)
- (2) Glassdrummond, Annalong, Co. Down (Nationalist)
- (3) Wolfe Tone, Newry, Co. Down.
- (4) Irish National Foresters, Coleraine, Co. Derry.
- (5) Irish National Foresters, Dungannon.

The march commenced at 7.5 p.m. when Brian QUINN gave the order, "By the left quick march" and the parade marched off with the marshals keeping the marchers in order four abreast.

At this stage it was difficult to estimate the number taking part as it was evident that a lot of people had come to Coalisland merely to see the march commence but with no intention of participating. I would estimate a crowd of approximately 1,500 in Coalisland.

When the marchers had moved off I went to Gilmour's Cross, a point approximately halfway between Coalisland and Dungannon, and I there served notices under the Public Order Act on:-

- (1) Miss Betty Sinclair, Belfast.
- (2) Edward McAteer, M.P. (he refused to accept)
- (3) Mr. Gerry Fitt, MP. (he refused to accept)
- (4) Mr. Kevin Agnew, Maghera.
- (5) Mr. Erskine Holmes, Northern Ireland Labour Party, Belfast.

At the same time I had the marchers counted carefully by a Sergeant and the number was found to be 672 exclusive of the bands.

As the march came to the outskirts of Dungannon others on the roadside fell in behind and I would estimate a crowd of approximately 1,500 finally arrived at Hospital Corner where some 500 supporters had gathered. At the Hospital Corner I saw Senator Lennon, Armagh, and I served a notice on him, he accepted pleasantly.

This corner had been sealed off by rope barriers erected at the junction of Thomas Street and Quarry Lane; some further fifty yards along Thomas Street another rope barrier was stretched across the street and four police tenders also formed a barrier to keep, as far as possible, the rival factions out of stone throw and sight of each other. A force of 1 H.C., 6 Serpts. and 40 Consts. were drawn up. Behind the barrier in Thomas Street some 1,500 people opposed to the march had formed.

The marchers reached the rope barrier at 8.45 p.m. and immediately stopped, The lorry already referred to, which had accompanied the march from Coalisland, was driven forward to the rope and stopped. No attempt was made at that stage to force a way through into Thomas Street. The marchers were in an ugly mood and Kevin Agnew, Maghera, and Thomas Gormley, M.P., approached me and said that the police restrictions were a denial of civil rights. Mr. Gormley was slightly intoxicated and in an argumentative mood. I told both men the extent of the order under the Public Order Act and they then mingled with the crowd.

The loudspeakers on the lorry failed and the meeting was not addressed until 9.5 p.m. when Miss Betty Sinclair addressed the crowd through the loudspeaker, she acted as Chairman of the meeting. In her opening remarks she said the parade

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was a peaceful one and held to demonstrate for Civil Rights in houses and employment, she asked that each speaker be allowed a hearing and the parade would go down in history.

During this introduction Miss Sinclair was loudly "booed" by some of the marchers. I heard cries of "Czechoslovakia", "Russia", "Jackboot" and one youth shouted "Are you on the Pill". At times her voice was drowned by the crowd and numerous scuffles took place round the platform. The crowd in Thomas Street behind the second barrier remained quiet.

Throughout the meeting which lasted until 10.20 p.m. the rear of the lorry which was being used as the platform was crowded with people. The following persons were seen on the platform at one time or another:-

- (1) Betty Sinclair, Communist (Secretary of Belfast and District Trades Council).
 - (2) Austin Currie, M.P., Nationalist.
 - (3) Eddie McAteer, M.P., Nationalist.
 - (4) Thomas Gormley, M.P., Nationalist.
 - (5) Edward Richardson, Nationalist M.P., S. Armagh.
 - (6) Michael J. Keogh, M.P., Nationalist.
 - (7) John Brennan, M.P., National Democratic Party.
 - (8) Thomas Gill, President of Sinn Fein, Dublin.
 - (9) Patrick F. Gill, Senator, Omagh.
 - (10) Gerry Fitt, M.P., Republican Labour.
 - (11) Kevin Agnew, Republican, Maghera, Co. Londonderry.
 - (12) Senator Lennon, Nationalist.
 - (13) Jack Hassard, Labour.
 - (14) Thomas O'Connor, Republican, 5 Gortgonis Park, Annaghmore, Coalisland.
 - (15) Brian Quinn, Republican, 6 Lakeview Park, Killeen, Stewartstown.
 - (16) James Joseph McQuaid, Republican, Mullaghrodden, Dungannon.
 - (17) Joe McCann. Secretary Nationalist Democratic Party.
 - (18) Erskine Holmes, Northern Ireland Labour Party.
 - (19) Thomas Mitchell, Republican, 7 Inverness Road, Fairview, Dublin.
 - (20) Michael McLoughlin, Dungannon U.D.C. Social Justice.
 - (21) Patrick McCusker, Republican, The Cottage, Keenaghan, Blackwatertown.
 - (22) John Donaghy, U.D.C., Dungannon.
 - (23) Patrick Duffy, Solicitor, Brackaville, Coalisland. The speakers included.
- (1) Fitt. (2) Hassard. (5) O'Connor. (4) McCann.
(5) Holmes. (6) Currie.

Mr. Fitt made a most provocative and highly inflammatory speech, he said amongst other things that "My blood is boiling at the police ban and let me tell the County Inspector and District Inspector who are in charge of the police here to-night that they are only a pair of black bastards of Gestapo and we are not afraid of the blackthorn sticks and batons and but for the presence of women and children I would lead the march into The Square". This inflamed the crowd, a section of which started to chant "R.U.C. SS", "Gestapo", "On to The Square". This section surged forward and the marshals had to force them back resulting in many scuffles, one youth attempted to strike me with a pole and I had to force him back into the crowd. No batons were drawn by the police. Some stones, broken placards and poles were thrown at the police cordon but no one was hurt.

The other speakers were reasonably mild in their remarks, with the exception of Mr. Currie, but all objected to the police decision in re-routing the march.

/Mr. Currie

Mr. CURRIE addressed the meeting towards the end, he was given a loud welcome by those around the platform while those opposed to the march sang "Derry's Walls", "The Sash my father wore" and the "National Anthem." At times his speech was drowned by the singing, but I did hear him protest against the police action and further that another march of bigger proportions would be organised which would not stop at the Hospital Gates.

The meeting ended with part of the crowd singing "We shall not be moved" and Mr. Kevin Agnew, Maghera, leading another section in the singing of "The Soldiers Song".

No arrests were made at the meeting, police remained there for some considerable time to ensure that the crowd dispersed peaceably. The speakers left almost immediately and the marchers broke up and went away. A small party of Young Socialists, the majority of whom were teenagers, made their way into Dungannon to look for their bus and also arrived into Market Square via Irish Street. There they became involved in arguments with Unionists but were put back by police into Irish Street without much difficulty. No force was used, other than pushing, to achieve this. There were approximately 2,000 people in The Square at this time, mostly Unionists, but the presence of the police prevented any further incidents, and the crowd gradually filtered away until by 12.45 a.m. the situation was back to normal. Two youths were arrested for disorderly behaviour and taken to the police station. They were later released.

I have no doubt that this march and meeting were organised by the committee of the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association at the instigation of Mr. Austin CURRIE, M.P. The latter has been agitating both in and out of Parliament for the past twelve months over the system of house-letting by Dungannon Urban and Rural Councils. He has spoken at various times and places of organising protests against what he describes as discrimination in the allocation of houses. On 13.10.1967, two men (Brian McKenna and Francis Goodfellow) with their wives and families unlawfully entered and took possession of two new Council Houses at Kinnaird Park, Caledon. Mr. CURRIE visited these families on a number of occasions and gave them advice and support. Action was taken by Dungannon Rural Council who summoned these squatters under Section 1 of S.J. (M.P.) Act (N.I.) 1946 and these cases were heard at Caledon Petty Sessions on 14.11.1967, when convictions were obtained and warrants issued for eviction against McKenna and Goodfellow, with stay of execution for 6 months to enable them to find alternative accommodation.

On 19.10.1967, Mr. CURRIE called with me at 9.40 a.m. and informed me that a man called Matthew McKenna had squatted in a new Urban Council House at 5, Fairmount Park, Dungannon. Mr. CURRIE again took an active interest in this event. The Urban Council officials met McKenna and came to an amicable settlement with him as a result of which he vacated the house on the understanding that he would be allocated another house on the same estate. No. 5 had been allocated to a key-worker in Turner Bros. Asbestos Ltd., Beechvalley Mill, Dungannon and this had been opposed by West Ward Nationalist members of the Urban District Council including Messrs. Michael McLoughlin and John Donaghy, who expressed the view that this key-worker could well have been allocated a house in another Ward with less hardship.

On 1.2.1968, it was reported that a family called McCormick had "squatted" in another new house, 23, Fairmount Park, in the same estate. Council officials immediately visited the premises and evicted them. Before they left, Mr. CURRIE arrived and had a discussion with them. He was interviewed by pressmen and spoke again of discrimination in housing.

Matters remained quiet until the month of June, 1968. In the interval, Brian McKenna had vacated the house he had illegally occupied at Caledon, and handed over possession to the Council but the Goodfellow family remained in possession of No. 11. On 18.6.1968, Mr. J.S. McF. Rountree, the Under-Sheriff for Co. Tyrone, accompanied by his bailiffs, went to No. 11, Kinnaird Park to enforce the ejectment order. This he effected only after considerable difficulty owing to obstruction and resistance by Patrick Joseph Gildernew, Mrs. Annie Gildernew and Thomas Edmund Burke (relations of the squatters).

/Again press

Again Press and T.V. Cameras were present and again Mr. Austin Currie spoke in protest against the eviction and promised further action to highlight the situation.

Two days later, on 20th June, 1968, Mr. Austin Currie, accompanied by the above-mentioned Patrick Joseph Gildernew and a Joseph Campbell, forcibly entered No.9 Kinnaird Park. This house had been allocated to and was occupied by a single girl, Miss Emily Beattie, and this allocation had been the subject of much talk and discussion in the Press and indeed in Parliament. Mr. Currie and his two companions remained in occupation of the house some three hours until finally ejected by Miss Beattie's brother assisted by police. As a result of this incident, summonses under Section 1(1) of the Summary Jurisdiction (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (N.I.) 1946 were issued on the instructions of the Attorney General against Mr. Currie and his two companions. These were heard by Mr. McCrea Elliott, R.M. at Caledon Petty Sessions on 13th August, 1968, and after legal argument were dismissed. An Appeal by way of Case Stated is being taken up. This incident and the resultant Court hearing received wide-spread publicity in the Press and on T.V. and Radio. During the sitting of the Court on 13th instant a number of people of Republican leanings picketed outside the Courthouse carrying placards alleging discrimination in the allocation of houses, etc.

It will be seen that throughout all this agitation Mr. Currie has taken a very active interest and has even gone so far as to infringe the law at Caledon. He believes, I think, that he is the saviour of the down trodden in Northern Ireland and thinks that by becoming involved in this agitation he will further his political career.

In loyalist circles in this area Mr. Currie is detested and his sympathy with the Republican cause is not lost sight of neither is his relationship with the perpetrators of the murder of Constable Forbes in Dungannon in 1942.

It has become increasingly clear also that Mr. Currie has aligned himself with noted Republicans in this area especially in the organisation of the Civil Rights march and with Brantry Republican Club in the Caledon affair. It is at times difficult to determine where his loyalties lie.

I am satisfied that the protest march was in reality a Republican one which is evidenced by the great number of noted Republicans taking part.

Due to the unruly crowd surrounding the platform it was found impossible to make a verbatim record of the speeches made but I am hopeful that a record will become available of at least some of those speeches and if this comes to hand it will be fully reported.

On Monday night the 26th instant, a Parish meeting was held in St. Patrick's Hall, Coalisland, where the Civil Rights march was one of the items discussed. At this meeting I understand Father Eustace, Senior Curate in Dungannon who has been involved in lengthy correspondence in the Press relating to alleged discrimination by the Urban and Rural District Councils in Dungannon, expressed the view that the march was a failure and castigated Messrs. Currie and Fitt for their violent speeches, he said that if any future marches were held it must be a condition that neither of these men should speak. The meeting endorsed these views. Mr. Currie was not present.

Feeling in this District continues to run high and I am satisfied beyond all doubt that the decision to re-route the march was a proper one and prevented what would have developed into a large scale riot. I also feel that those participating in the march, if they would be honest with themselves, would be of the same opinion.

/Total

Total police Force used in connection with the march and meeting was:-

1 County Inspector.

1 District Inspector.

3 Head Constables.

22 Sergeants.

80 Constables.

2 Women Constables.

Constable MONTGOMERY, Dungannon (Dog Handler) with police dog Rocky II was positioned in the grounds of old Drumglass School to prevent loyalists from filtering into the area of the meeting, this dog was not near the actual meeting and was invisible from the platform.

As I have already said no arrests were made at the meeting, no batons were used and no one has complained to the police here of injury or abuse.

(Sgd.) G.I. STERRITT,
District Inspector.