

**DRAFT REPLY TO REV MARTIN SMYTH RE INCIDENTS AT ROYAL
VICTORIA HOSPITAL**

You telephoned my office late on Friday afternoon, 16 March 1984, expressing concern about reports that members of Sinn Fein were maintaining a presence at the Royal Victoria Hospital allegedly to guard Mr Adams and others while they were receiving in-patient treatment. It was further alleged that these people were stopping and questioning members of the public going about their business within the hospital.

I have now received reports from the Board. They believe that some people who might have been members of Sinn Fein were present in the hospital. For most of the time Mr Adams was in hospital at least two people were involved but the numbers did fluctuate and for short periods as many as eight people were present. Such people were not allowed into the wards but were confined to public areas where they did not interfere with the normal running of the hospital. They were not guarding Mr Adams or any other patients. Where patients require special protection it is provided by the RUC who guarded Mr Adams throughout his stay in the hospital.

The Board has no evidence and has received no complaints from members of the public that they were either harrassed or inconvenienced when going about their normal business in the hospital. Technically the presence of these people infringed the normal administrative arrangements of the hospital. It was, however, possible that the people concerned would not

leave unless forced to do so, and accordingly local management consulted local police about whether to initiate action to remove them. They were advised that as the normal routine of the hospital was not being disrupted, as there was no threat of a breach of the peace and as there was no nuisance being caused it would serve no useful purpose to take further action. Indeed it was assumed that, if Sinn Fein had any clear motive for their statement and actions, it was to provoke such a confrontation for propaganda purposes in order to raise tension in the area still further. The hospital management accepted and acted in accordance with this advice.

In short, the response to these incidents was largely governed by a concern to ensure that essential services to patients were not disrupted and that a confrontation did not develop between Sinn Fein supporters on the one hand and the hospital authorities and police on the other. It was clear that a situation of this kind could reasonably be exploited for propaganda purposes by people wishing to do so. As tensions were already running high in the aftermath of the shooting of Mr Adams, the police, for perfectly proper operational reasons, did not wish to see any action being taken which would have exacerbated an already tense situation unless there was a clear need to do so. In this case the actions of Sinn Fein had no effect whatsoever on either police operations or the efficient running of the hospital.

However, if at any future date members of Sinn Fein or indeed

any other organisation intrude into a hospital and threaten either a nuisance or a breach of the peace or cause a deterioration in the efficient management of the hospital then you may rest assured that the management of that hospital would take steps to remove these people from the premises and that the police would give them all the support they might require in doing so.