DJW/18/4

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        US CENT SEC
DATE: 6 APRIL 1993

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      Mr Ledlie
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      NI Perm Secs
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      Mr Lyon
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      Mr Williams
      Mr Crozier, T&EA
      Mr Mackenzie, DOE
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      Mr Marsh
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      Mr McConnell
      Mr Quinn
      Mr Hill
      Mr Stephens
      Ms Gray

PS/Mr Fell

<u>PROTESTANT ALIENATION</u>

Following my submission of 9 March to PS/SofS, I attach two
separate notes from community activists in Protestant areas
which are illuminating for the insights they provide into
current sentiment in those areas. As such they are a useful
adjunct to my submission.

[Signed DJW]

D J WATKINS

DJW/RJ/16755

CONCERNS IN PROTESTANT AREAS

This paper has been written by a Catholic brought up in the Nationalist tradition who has been working in a Protestant community for over 3 years. My work has brought me in intimate contact with all age groups in an advisory and counselling role. That work has given me an invaluable insight into Protestant culture and mores and has developed in me a huge admiration for Protestant life values, attitudes and qualities. Sadly, that opportunity is denied to the vast majority of Catholics.

I have started this paper in this way for a conscious reason. **Because I genuinely feel that it will in some way carry more weight if the readers know that it is written by a Catholic.** And that in itself is part and parcel of the problems - and they are serious - that this paper discusses. Because it should of course carry exactly the same weight whoever the author. Certainly, the mood it attempts to describe is real, is justifiable and is worsening.

There does not seem to be much doubt that the general morale and mood in Protestant districts on the ground has changed. There appears to be a growing sense of cynicism, hopelessness and disillusionment. That has understandably led to a sense of resentment - against politicians,police (oddly enough as distinct from security forces in general) Government and statutory bodies, and of course against Catholics/Nationalists. While this has always been true of some members of the Protestant community to some degree there seems to be generally a more bitter feeling emerging over the past year or so.

It is not difficult to identify some of the causes of the change. Protestants feel that they are losing something, and that feeling is being constantly reinforced it appears by not only Nationalist press which is understandable and perfectly tolerable but also by policy makers, Statutory Bodies, politicians in and from mainland Britain, which to many protestants is intolerable.

In some subtle way Protestant and Unionist values do not seem to be highly regarded or valued anymore. There is much less public debate about issues of concern to them. There therefore appears to be no-one putting their case. Indeed, it seems almost 'de rigeur' for any public spokesman or any public body to openly argue much less promote Protestant issues. As an example of that in this neighbourhood, there is widespread concern about the possibility of part of the estate being cut off and allocated to catholic tenants. To date the Housing Executive have avoided any public statement on the issue (and of course they may have reasons of their own to keep quiet for fear of raising some kind of storm.) Indeed,

they failed to respond in any way to a letter in the Andersonstown News promoting the idea. But at the height of community concern they cancelled a public meeting to debate that and other matters. No doubt they had a sound reason - but that has not been clearly communicated to the people and there has not apparently been any effort to reschedule the meeting. In the context of Northern Ireland affairs, that and similar incidents must seem to policy makers to be paltry matters. But in the context of Protestant self-image they are matters of a significance that is unfortunately grossly underestimated.

There is a growing discontent with the level of community policing. Petty crime and public nuisance activities appear to the community to be ignored by the police and are thus often not worth reporting. But they are an irritating intrusion into people's daily lives and are socially debilitating. While Protestants readily understand the demands on police time from anti-terrorist matters, they nonetheless feel frustrated by what they see as neglect of their legitimate community concerns. That frustration is heightened by the belief that the police should recognise that they are 'safe' in Protestant areas; thus if they fail to service the community's needs they are seen as consciously abandoning it as a policy. That adds to a feeling of increasing isolation.

Compared to catholic areas, it is perceived that protestant areas fare badly in the fight for investment both economic and social. Whether or not that is objectively true is almost unimportant in the context of this paper. There exists a strong conviction amongst many protestants that it is so. At the very best there has been a bad failure of communication. At the worst there needs to be a serious look at the relative allocation of resources between communities.

Partly as a result of a feeling of alienation from more formal structures, protestant communities such as this one rely more and more heavily on the support and the work of their local community groups. In this regard they are reaching or perhaps have reached the stage that catholic communities were at in the early seventies. Community groups working in such areas succeed surprisingly often in engaging residents' interests and energies in social and economic projects. But the processes in which community groups then have to engage are so complex and long-winded before they reach a visible output for projects that people lose momentum. That adds further to disillusionment. Often groups themselves lack the resources both in terms of money and manpower to make a fully effective contribution to their client areas. They are thus seen by many clients as well-meaning but lacking in real power. Yet they are in actuality a real bulwark between the 'ordinary' people and anti-social elements and in every sense a substitute for statutory bodies. There is totally inadequate

support for and recognition of the work of such groups in general; but for similar reasons as those set out above there seems to be a perception that community groups in protestant areas are seen as less important or less relevant to Government aims. Their potential for impacting positively on the community is thus downgraded. There is a real risk that their influence unless palpable support is forthcoming will wane. That can lead to a growth, already evident, in the influence of paramilitaries.

There can be no doubt that protestant paramilitaries have succeeded in changing peoples' perception of them both as an organisation and in terms of their role in relation to protestant communities. That of course is primarily true in the case of youths. The predictable result of that is improved recruitment. That in turn leads to increased influence in the community and increased criminal activity(more drug running, more money lending, more selling of cheap drink, etc.) In short - more control. However, it would be wrong to assume that increased paramilitary influence affects only the young. Most protestants will abhor violence and its effects. But many these days can and do distinguish between the acts and the perpetrators. There will be no sympathy for the act, but more and more perhaps - and by good people - are paramilitaries being seen as the only defenders of Protestant culture, Protestant ideals and Protestant rights. And that paradox, in the longer term, if it is a drift that is allowed to continue, will be far more destructive than a growth in paramilitary acts, because it will threaten to disrupt any political or social initiatives.

In conclusion, it is no part of this paper to suggest solutions. But the point needs once again to be underlined that any solution to the Northern Ireland problem can and will only come from the people of the Province themselves. Serious questions thus have to be asked about the nature and extent of policy makers' efforts to facilitate that process in any meaningful way. Reliance on elected representatives, wedded as they are to the images of themselves and their official party policies for however understandable reasons will not in a worsening situation suffice. They are of necessity from their viewpoint concerned about jockeying for position over what they see as their parties' long-term interests. In the meantime, Rome threatens to burn.

What perhaps would be most useful is an open, honest and courageous review of current attitudes and strategies in relation to the Protestant/Loyalist viewpoint by the Authorities. Key questions beg to be asked:

> What conscious efforts are made to engage and empower the people in whose hands the solutions lie? What resources and what support is given to

those working at the coalface in Protestant communities?

What efforts are made to educate the public at large about the huge contribution made historically, currently, and potentially in the future by Protestantism to the quality of life in this part of the world?

How effective if they exist at all are public relations and propaganda policies in the promotion of Protestant viewpoints?

To what extent does Government pay too much attention to what it sees as the sensitivities of Nationalists and the Republic's Government? On critical issues such as Articles 2 & 3? On Southern legislation in respect of divorce, abortion, other issues that contradict the beliefs or the civil rights of protestant citizens there?

In its relationships with the South and the world at large is the British Government too apologist about Protestantism and Unionism?

What Protestantism seeks and perhaps needs at this time is clear and unequivocal evidence that its values and its interests are being protected, are being fully understood and are being genuinely respected. Unfortunately, whatever policy makers think, it is not seeing that evidence now. And that is a dangerous situation which needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

E.J.Gallagher

GROWING ANTAGONISMS IN PROTESTANT COMMUNITIES

Relatively recent increases in violent and murderous attacks by 'Loyalist' paramilitary groups represent the unacceptable sharp end of a wedge which is contained largely in predominantly protestant neighbourhoods with unacceptably high levels of social and economic need.

For more than four years militant attitudes have been developing with disaffected young adults recruited into now proscribed organisations. This, coupled with intimidation of peers and mindless disruption of the communities in which they live, bodes ill for a future in which they begin to see themselves as betrayed losers - soon-to-be oppressed second-class citizens in a place which they had been told was their own country.

The young turks believe fervently in the inevitability of the march of triumphalist catholic nationalism/republicanism (to them there is no difference). In this context the only option for protestants is to leave or develop a militant anti-catholic stance which includes opposing those *friends of the IRA*' who favour community reconciliation.

The lesson taught by the Provos and the government is that militancy produces results and that collaborative approaches by well disposed community activists are both feebly supported and ineffectual. If the cause of an effectively disenfranchised protestant/unionist people is thought by government to be too unimportant, in comparison with catholic/nationalist claims, to warrant serious consideration then steps are required to ensure change.

In-depth enquiries seem to indicate that there is no strategy, known to senior members of loyalist groups, to gain more control of 'protestant' areas and to attack, intimidate and threaten community activists. However, younger mavericks acting outside currently recognised local structures and across traditional intra-organisational boundaries would appear to have clear action plans. Indeed, activities against 'co-religionists' involved in 'inappropriate' contacts or programmes are overtly sanctioned by local commanders even if such terrorist acts are directed against the communities in which they reside.

In increasingly marginalised areas such as Suffolk in west Belfast, where territorial integrity is again threatened, potential personnel for active units are being drafted in to live in the neighbourhood in increasing numbers for a 'last stand'. Increasingly articulate, the leaders of this movement are another generation away from church, moral and social controls and are therefore likely to be involved in increasingly callous and vicious activity.

It may be that we are seeing the beginning of a 'provisional' movement arising from rapidly growing dissatisfaction with present leadership and frustrated at the political impasse reinforced by inadequacy of support for positive activities deriving from their communities.

Some reasons for growing loyalist antagonisms are described below. They derive from political, cultural, economic and spiritual issues:

Political Issues:
Anxiety and anger deriving from interpretations of the 1991 Census results which are taken to indicate that total powerlessness and disenfranchisment will very soon be a reality. This is supported by a folk memory of the treatment in the Republic of Ireland of the ten percent protestant population at the time of partition and subsequent involvement of that country's government in the encouragement of PIRA.

In contrast with attitudes demonstrated towards the Scottish Office the government invariably posts a tranche of non-local politicians to facilitate the NIO. An official stance which dehumanises protestants as intransigent bigots was, of course, confirmed by the non-consultative betrayal of the Anglo-Irish Agreement and supported through on-going powerlessness and effective disenfranchisement at local and national levels with leaders easily and publically fobbed off with official platitudes which could not be countenanced in the least home counties constituency.

All of this negative feeling, often strengthened by a need to prove competence from a position of educational under-achievement, becomes focused in antagonisms aimed at catholics upon whom the government is perceived to shower its favour. This is in contrast to insensitive redevelopment of protestant areas, dislocation of communities and percieved lack of funding for strategic development.

Cultural Issues:
A cultural and identity crisis coupled with a growing sense of hopelessness afflicts protestants who recently began to learn that many living in disadvantaged communities, and not only deprived catholics, come from what has been described as a twentieth century underclass. This represents an uncomfortable shift from being God's own people in God's own country.

The community dislocation, consequent loss of extended family support and decrease in adherence to religious practice have, over the last three to four decades resulted in declines in parental discipline and levels of morality.

Economic Issues:
The industrial rationalisation process of the eighties and on-going recessionary cycles removed the appartent secure employment enjoyed by the protestant community. Sectarian turmoil and the negative image supported by republican terrorism has inhibited industrial reinvestment in disadvantaged areas so long-term unemployment continues without apparent solution. Apathetic attitudes, poor educational and skill levels and contra work ethic principles have been noted in recent research.

Government priorities to satisfy legitimate public and
political demands for improvements for nationalist areas has
lead to a feeling of abandonment in protestant neighbourhoods.
In these areas self-help and business support has often been
less marked and less supported than in catholic areas
indicating apparent lack of leadership and business acumen.

These factors lead to inadequate facilitation of economic
recovery of local communities and a percieved lack of
appropriate investment by government to achieve regeneration
of a wealth creating sector. Anything that has been going in
to that purpose from government or from the IFI has been seen
as tending to find its way much more readily to well supported
nationalist areas.

Policies and programmes supposedly aimed at targeting social
need seem not to be coincident with essential self-help
strategies or with protestant areas.

Finally, the current economic and industrial development and
training strategies based on 'competitiveness' alone have
been read as excluding almost one hundred thousand people from
the labour market in the long term. The majority of these
inhabit the Belfast Action Areas

Spiritual Issues:
Population shifts in Belfast have resulted in marked loss of
religious affiliation amongst protestants with a consequent
loss of a spiritual framework for guidance, discipline and
moral training.

The 'protestant' community has been becoming increasingly
secular during recent decades with the consequence that
amorality, family breakdown and other social indicators are
also on the increase.

The philosophy of evangelical protestantism, with its
emphasis on individual conscience, is often represented as
running counter to social development and support mechanisms.
Perhaps as a result overt anti-christian stances and action
are increasingly apparent in community work. Loyalist
paramilitaries have, with their republican counterparts,
exibited a predeliction to hark back to pre-christian
mythology for sustainance.

The teaching of Christ with its emphasis on reconciliation on
the basis of truth, mercy, justice and peace is virtually lost
in a plethora of denominational dogma and religio-political
alignments.