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614/97

ORDER/ 47072
10 APR 1997
CENT SEC

FROM: S J LEACH
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR POLICING AND SECURITY
9 APRIL 1997

in Langdon
10.4
Mark Report file

For only advice / draft reply on X.

M.:

- what have we already provided in grant?
- do we believe MVI office needs regulated?
- is a consultant's assignment solve problem more easily?
- what chances / implications of

- cc:
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
 - PS/Sir D Fell - B
 - Mr Steele - B
 - Mr Thomas - B
 - Mr Bell - B
 - Mr Blackwell - B
 - Mr Stephens - B
 - Mr Watkins - B
 - Mr Canavan
 - Mr Maccabe - B
 - Mr Perry - B
 - Mr Priestly - B
 - Mr Smyth - B
 - Mr Clarke - B
 - Mr Webb - B
 - Mr Gray, OLC
 - Mr Strain - B
 - Mrs Evans, HOLAB - M

SSW/ SEC 8914
4 APR 1997
C.C.R.U.

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

Seconding a girl servant? @ 10.4

DISCUSSION WITH CHAIRMAN OF PARADES COMMISSION: 8 APRIL

1. Mr Steele and I met Alistair Graham, the Chairman of the Parades Commission, and Richard Buchanan (its Secretary) over dinner last night for an informal discussion of the Commission's first two weeks.
2. Mr Graham began by raising the future role of the Commission, noting that he had telephoned Dr Mowlam just before the Commission was launched. She had indicated that a Labour Government would be minded to put through a Bill giving the full North powers to the Commission "in the first few days" of a new Administration. After two weeks in post, Mr Graham felt increasingly concerned about such a development, fearing that the transfer of full powers might well put the Commission into a "lose/lose" situation before it had had

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the chance really to establish its authority or develop the necessary links into the community. He intended to go back to Dr Mowlam, before the Election, to suggest that there might be other options short of full implementation which would prove better in the long run. He had no fixed views about what these might be, but did think that some development of the Commission's role would be advantageous to anchor its activities over the summer months.

3. Since Mr Graham had opened this door himself, we pursued a hypothetical discussion of what a further stage of development falling short of full implementation might be. Mr Graham thought that one very valid reason for delay could be the need to develop, and then circulate for consultation, the procedures which the Commission would need to adopt before reaching a determination - eg the methodology of establishing discussions, independent mediation, etc. The need for consultation on these draft procedures might as a practical matter make it impossible to give the Commission full powers in time for this summer. (He thought the statute should prescribe that these procedures would need the Secretary of State's approval.) We suggested that, while this might be a good secondary reason, a more positive approach might be to look for a significant, if non-statutory, enlargement of the Commission's remit. This might be achieved by giving it an advisory role, either as a declared interim step towards full powers or, perhaps preferably, deferring the decision on powers to a review after the summer. Mr Graham thought that this model (if it were politically acceptable) would have real attractions, particularly if any statement announcing it had a "hard edge" to indicate that if behaviour on both sides did not show a significant improvement this summer, then a strict legislative regime would be imposed. He reiterated that he would seek to ring Dr Mowlam in the near future to indicate his view that the optimum policy might not be to give the Commission full powers immediately.

4. Moving on, Mr Graham commented that he had just had a meeting with David Trimble, and would be meeting further UUP dignitaries (including the Chairman, Denis Rogan) over dinner tonight. Trimble

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had suggested that a "deal" was on offer for the Ormeau Road this year, involving each of the marching organisations having one parade past the Lower Ormeau. We said that this sounded a little implausible, unless the residents had softened. Mr Graham planned to ring the Chief Constable to ask for his views on this. On Drumcree, Trimble had said [as we know separately] that Brendan McAllister could not function as a mediator since he was unacceptable to McKenna and the residents. It concerned Mr Graham that on this most important of parades there was no obvious mediator in view (although he recognised that the churches could have a role, and was planning to see Archbishop Eames shortly). Mr Steele recommended that he should also try to involve Archbishop Brady, and suggested the Chief Executive of Craigavon Council as a very useful local figure.

5. Mr Graham commented that, although the North Report saw the role of the Commission as identifying and rationalising mediation resources rather than undertaking this activity directly itself, his initial impression was that, apart from Brendan McAllister and the Mediation Network, there was little or no professional mediation capacity active in the parades field. He therefore believed that the Commission should have an in-house capacity in this area - someone whose primary task would be to identify and marshal mediation resources which the Commission could bring to bear as necessary, but who would also have a track record in mediation and could be deployed directly by the Commission where the situation demanded it. Thus at Drumcree, it would be very useful for the Commission to have a resource, short of the Chairman himself, who could be deployed in a mediation/fact-finding role.

6. We said that this idea seemed to have much to commend it. If the right person could be identified, it was probable that resources could be found. We would enquire about possibilities in, eg, the Labour Relations Agency. Mr Graham also mentioned the desirability of Brendan McAllister having some support on the bookkeeping/logistical side, in view of the time he was necessarily devoting these days to active mediation. Might it be possible for a

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civil servant to be temporarily seconded to help sort out his office? Before grant-aiding Mediation Network, the Commission would wish to be confident about the financial control systems in place. This could be a valuable and challenging developmental experience for the official in question. We said that we would put this idea to colleagues. [NOTE: In view of CCRU's sponsorship of Mediation Network, might it be possible for Mr Watkins to arrange for this proposal to be taken forward?] | X

7. On the Commission, Mr Graham said that this was starting to work together reasonably well as a team, although it would not really start to gel until it had collectively to address real issues. Roy Magee was a considerable asset and clearly had a lot to contribute on the parades issue. He thought that the unionist criticisms of David Hewitt and Berna McIvor would be seen off as the Commission got itself more established. (He reported that David Hewitt had received a letter from George Dawson, the Imperial Grand Master of the Independent Orange Order, which sounded to be on the same lines as that Mr Dawson sent to the Secretary of State, which is being dealt with as a Minister's Case. Mr Hewitt had apparently replied in conciliatory fashion suggesting a meeting.)

8. Overall, Mr Graham seemed to be in good heart and to be shaping up energetically and sensibly to the challenges facing the Commission. However, he is clearly concerned that early enlargement of its responsibilities might pose unmanageable difficulties.

[signed] SJL

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