

C O N F I D E N T I A L

FROM: PETER SMYTH
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
JUNE 1994

ASST./
SEC 362/6
30 JUN 1994
C.C.R.U.

- cc PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Mr Fell - B
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Legge - B
- Mr Williams - B
- Mr Steele - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mr Perry - B

Mr. Casson.
AA

in Cof 30.6
1238/6
Mr Consett

PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B

SOMME ANNIVERSARY: BELFAST CITY HALL, 1 JULY

I understand that the Minister has already received a programme for this function.

2. The details are as for last year's ceremony. It is suggested that the Minister should plan to arrive at the City Hall (back entrance) shortly before 11.00 am, and proceed to the Mayor's Parlour, where the other guests will be assembling.

3. The Mayor's procession forms up in the corridor outside the Parlour, and makes its way to the Garden of Remembrance outside the City Hall at 11.15 am. The Minister will be in the front rank of the procession, along with the Lord Mayor and the Lord Lieutenant for the Borough of Belfast.

4. At the wreath-laying ceremony, the Lord Lieutenant lays the first wreath, and the Minister the second. The wreath will be held at the City Hall and carried to the ceremony by one of the Council officials. No speeches are made. Lounge suit and decorations (if appropriate) are considered to be suitable dress.

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5. After the ceremony, the Minister will be invited to join the other guests for drinks in the Banqueting Hall. It is highly unlikely that any Sinn Fein Councillors will be present at the ceremony; but if any are present, arrangements can be made to ensure they do not come into contact with the Minister.

6. Because of the failure of Belfast Councillors to behave responsibly, the Secretary of State and Minister do not make official visits to the City Hall to discuss local concerns. This makes the Councillors - particularly those on the Unionist side - particularly anxious to maximise any contact with Ministers. The Minister will recall that, at the conclusion of last year's ceremony, he was carried off to the Mayor's Parlour for a private tete a tete with the leading Unionist Councillors.

7. The possibility of something similar happening again cannot be ruled out; but if it does take place, it is appropriate for the Minister to treat it as a listening exercise. Hugh Smyth as Lord Mayor seems anxious to thicken relations with the NIO, and will not wish to jeopardise that by any intemperate displays involving the Minister.

8. Personality notes on the Lord Mayor and his Deputy are attached, together with a brief note on the current state of City Hall politics.

9. I will be in attendance at the ceremony.

[signed PS]

PETER SMYTH
SH EXT 27087

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ALDERMAN HUGH SMYTH

PROGRESSIVE UNIONIST PARTY - MAYOR OF BELFAST 1994/95

Background

Born in the Shankill area of Belfast in 1939. He was first elected to Belfast City Council in 1972, was Deputy Lord Mayor 1983-84 and 1993/94. He has long-standing (and acknowledged) links with the UVF. First became active in Loyalist politics in the 1970's. Has been strongly identified with unemployment and Loyalist prisoners' welfare, and community work through campaigns such as 'Save the Shankill' and his association with the Greater Shankill Development Agency. He is the only elected representative of the Progressive Unionist Party, but has a strong personal following in the Shankill area.

Personality and Political Views

An honest, working-class Loyalist, he is generally regarded as exercising a moderating influence both on the Shankill Road and in the Council. He is currently seeking to develop his political influence, with a view to making his Party a mouthpiece for the expression of Protestant working class views on a broader front. In private, he puts forward a political analysis which is surprisingly forward-looking, embracing a power-sharing Assembly, and meaningful North/South institutions; but to date he has not been prepared to go public with such sentiments. He began his period of office as Mayor with a pledge to work for all the citizens of Belfast, and to act impartially in the conduct of Council business: but the non-Unionist parties will require practical evidence of this before giving Smyth the benefit of any doubt.

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COUNCILLOR IAN ADAMSON

UUP DEPUTY LORD MAYOR OF BELFAST, 1994-95

Background

Dr Ian Adamson is a qualified paediatrician who works at the Travellers' Clinic in Lincoln Avenue, off the Antrim Road in Belfast. He is also employed by the Eastern Board to provide paediatric services to Fleming Fulton and other special care schools in the Belfast area. He has been a member of Belfast City Council since 1989.

Dr Adamson is Treasurer of the Victoria Constituency Association of the UUP, and in that capacity has been active in politics for some years. Through his involvement with the Farset community project in North Belfast, he has developed links with the Somme Association and the Somme Centre at Conlig near Bangor.

Personality and Political Views

This is consistent with his academic interests, which include authorship of a number of books. These purport to prove that the Protestant planters who came to Ulster from Scotland in the early 17th century were the descendants of the original occupants of the north of Ireland. Such assertions - most of which are not accepted by the mainstream academic community - are used to prove (to Dr Adamson's satisfaction) that the Ulster Protestants are not the usurpers of the Gaelic population, so much as a dispossessed people who returned to reclaim their patrimony. These theories, plus other, similar, well-publicised enthusiasms have earned Dr Adamson a reputation for mild eccentricity with which he appears quite happy to live.

No one is quite sure what Dr Adamson gets from politics. In the City Council he seems to rise above the squabbles which are irresistible to his colleagues. One commentator recently described him as having an instinct for publicity which made the average dormouse look ambitious. Given his mild demeanour and slightly eccentric appearance, it is an assessment with which Dr Adamson would not necessarily disagree.

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BELFAST CITY COUNCIL

The Council is a microcosm of many of the negative aspects of Belfast, and indeed of Northern Ireland as a whole. It is the largest Council in the Province with 51 members, a budget of around £50 million and over 200,000 electors. It has a long tradition running back through the old Belfast Corporation and sees itself rather grandly as the 'second Parliament of Northern Ireland' (the first Parliament actually sat in the City Hall in 1921).

Composition of the Council

The current composition of the Council is as follows:-

Ulster Unionist Party (UUP)	16
Sinn Fein	10
Democratic Unionist Party (DUP)	9
Social Democratic and Labour Party (SDLP)	9
Alliance Party	5
Independent Unionist	1
Progressive Unionist Party (PUP)	1

The Parties

Numerically the Unionists have a majority of three over all the others and while they often fall out among themselves, Unionist unity is usually maintained on crucial issues. Sinn Fein, with 10 seats, remains the second largest party after the UUP.

There is some evidence to support the view that SF are prepared to play a more positive role in Council affairs than formerly (possibly as part of a wider strategy to make the Party look more politically responsible, and avoid contradicting Adams' public protestations about their commitment to peace.) As public representatives many of them in Belfast have a reputation for being more hard-working and effective than their Unionist counterparts. Their presence on Council Committees is now taken for granted, and although the recent election of Bobby Lavery to the Chair of the Housing Liaison

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Committees was due to a Unionist voting blunder, the idea of Sinn Fein representatives being in positions of influence is now not so inconceivable as it would have been even a few years ago.

That is not to say that the Unionist group are unanimously prepared to encourage such developments. During the period of Reg Empey's Mayoralty, orderly Council debates became the norm, and even Sinn Fein contributions were given a polite, if unenthusiastic, hearing. But the appointment of Councillors Smyth and Adamson as Mayor and Deputy Mayor in May 1994 was not only a blow to SDLP aspirations, but was interpreted as evidence that the right wing of the Unionist group was becoming dominant. Dropping Empey in favour of Smyth was thought to be disastrous in terms of the Council's image in the eyes of the wider public. The failure of the Unionists to recognise this fact (or their indifference to it) suggests that there may be a return to the days of DUP-driven confrontational politics.

In these joustings, the SDLP are not entirely blameless. Some sources indicate that offers of responsibility-sharing which have been extended have been passed up because they did not precisely correspond to SDLP aspirations. Some Unionists also allege that the SDLP cannot afford to get drawn too far into co-operative politics in case the resulting success weakens their argument for not devolving additional powers to local Councils. The tendency of SDLP Councillors like Alex Attwood to take extreme positions in public is also a factor which works against the growth of cross-party trust and understanding.

Personalities

The main personalities on the Council are spread across the parties. On the UUP side, Fred Cobain is a trade Unionist: very much a fixer behind the scenes, he is sometimes suspected of plotting for its own sake. Reg Empey, the ex-Lord Mayor, is one of

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the UUP's intelligentsia: quietly spoken, sharp and authoritative. Among the DUP, Sammy Wilson, a schoolteacher, is aggressively hard-line on most issues, and has a reputation in non-Unionist circles as a mindless bigot. Nigel Dodds (like Wilson a former Lord Mayor) is Ian Paisley's European assistant: a more polished performer than his colleague, he is no less intransigent on fundamentals. Alban Maginnis puts forward the SDLP case with reasonableness and moderation (often much-tested). John Alderdice, the leader of the Alliance Party, brings clarity and common sense to the debating of important issues.

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