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CENT SEC

FROM: PETER SMYTH
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION
20 June 1997

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - O
- PS/Mr Murphy (B&L) - O
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L) - O
- PS/PUS (B&L) - O
- PS/Sir David Fell - O
- Mr Thomas - O
- Mr Leach - O
- Mr Stephens - O
- Mr Watkins - O
- Mr Bell - O
- Mr Wood (B&L) - O
- Mr Maccabe - O
- Mr T Smyth - O
- Mr Hill - O
- Mr Beeton - O
- Mr Brooker - O
- Mr Priestly - O
- Mr Clarke - O
- Mr Margetts - O
- Mr Warner - O
- Supt Maxwell - O

ASST./ SEC 27/16
23 JUN 1997
C.C.R.U.

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1. cc in hand
2. in Campaign
20.1

Mr Steele - O

**MEETING WITH REPRESENTATIVES OF POMEROY LOYAL ORDERS,
19 JUNE**

Introduction

At his request, you and I met yesterday with the Rev William Bingham and two representatives of the Loyal Orders from Pomeroy. Robert Cinnamon represented the Orange Order, and Richard Reid the Royal Black Preceptory. The latter did most of the talking.

2. The picture they presented was one with which we are becoming increasingly familiar - a group of so-called residents making increasingly unreasonable demands on the moderation and tolerance of the local Loyal Orders; the RUC apparently

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taking the line of least resistance; and apparently well-founded fears about the long-term consequences for the Protestant minority in Pomeroy.

Detail

3. Objections to parades in Pomeroy are comparatively recent. In 1991, a parade ban was sought (? by a local Sinn Fein representative), but when the subsequent application for a judicial review was overturned in the Court of Appeal, the heat went out of the issue until the summer of 1996. There is some suggestion that part of the Loyal Orders' traditional parading route was voluntarily given up during that period as a gesture towards community relations. In 1996 however, and obviously on the coat-tails of Drumcree, a residents' group was formed to object to the parade of the Black Preceptory through the village at the end of August, on their return from the main Black demonstration.

4. Conscious of the fact that Protestants are in a substantial minority in Pomeroy, and vulnerable to retaliation, when met with a demonstration which the RUC seemed reluctant to disperse, the Black leaders opted instead for a short religious service before breaking up. This non-aggressive behaviour they claim has since been exploited, with the residents' group making increasingly unreasonable demands on the Loyal Orders, particularly in regard to them gaining access to the parish church and the area immediately surrounding it, the Diamond.

5. The residents' group itself is a somewhat shadowy organisation, the main figures being Sean Begley, a Sinn Fein Councillor, [REDACTED]. Neither are local, and the group itself is based in the Keeragh housing estate, half-a-mile outside Pomeroy. No public meetings of the group have been held, and even the Mediation Network has apparently given up on attempts to discern what is their negotiating position. At the very least, however, it is apparent that considerable effort is required for such residents to be offended by parades in Pomeroy itself.

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6. On the other hand, the Roman Catholic residents on the parade route from the parish hall to the church (along which the religious divide is said to be 50:50) are apparently broadly tolerant of the four parades which take place through the village each year. The Loyal Orders have no objection to meeting representatives of these people - "the genuine residents" - and have on a number of occasions altered the time of their parades in order to accommodate attendance at Saturday evening Mass. Messrs Cinnamon and Reid have also agreed to meet (or have already met) the Independent Parades Commission; but they resolutely refuse to meet and give credence to Begley [REDACTED]

7. This stand-off is set in the context of the campaign of economic boycott which has been mounted against Protestant businesses in Pomeroy over the last year. Rainey's, the butchers, has closed down, and Ramsay the fuel oil supplier is said to be in difficulties. The "decent" Catholic population has been forced to take part in the boycott, but rather than transfer their trade to local Catholic traders, have taken their business to Cookstown. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Apart from these Protestant businessmen (and William Bingham's own family) the majority of the Protestant residents in Pomeroy are elderly.

8. What the Pomeroy Loyal Orders see, therefore, is a concerted effort by Sinn Fein to cleanse their village of Protestants, with economic boycott and escalating demands about the routing of parades forming coherent parts of an overall pattern of coercion. The moderate leadership of the Orders wishes to be flexible and avoid confrontation if at all possible, but fear that their moderation will only be further exploited in pursuance of Sinn Fein's hidden agenda. Alongside that, they foresee a real danger that the wilder elements in the Orders' membership, if the situation continues, will take matters into their own hands.

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Comment

9. This account of the situation has had to be taken at face value, and no doubt a number of points could be made subject to a more testing examination than we were in a position to mount. That said, the personal qualities of both Cinnamon and Reid impressed me, and at the end I regretted that we could offer them little more than personal expressions of sympathy. The idea of Loyalist triumphalism plays no part in their thinking, and their concern to maintain good relations with the Catholic residents of the village really did seem to be motivated by more than a pragmatic realisation of the need for self-preservation. In the situation they described, it would have been fatuous to advise them to display flexibility by talking to the residents' group.

10. In Pomeroy, it looks as if Sinn Fein are making little attempt to put together even a semi-respectable case for opposing parades. We can only hope that, by overplaying their hand, they expose the true weakness of their position - although Sinn Fein are usually careful to avoid such pitfalls.

11. After the meeting, Bingham stayed behind for a private word to update us on the meeting he and the Armagh Grand Lodge representatives had had the previous day with Ahern and Mansergh. This appeared to be satisfactory so far as it went, but Bingham was left with the impression that both men remained committed to the idea of getting Sinn Fein back under the Fianna Fail umbrella, and that the current condemnation of Adams would quickly be modified if it was judged expedient to do so.

12. Having passed across a copy of the letter the Grand Lodge was preparing to send to the Prime Minister, Bingham expressed some interest in the idea you floated that the Drumcree stand-off might be ritualised in some form which gave both sides an honourable way out - eg, the Orangemen to re-schedule their religious service to an earlier hour, and walk to church via Garvagh Road, where a peaceful protest would be mounted, parting after a previously-agreed period of time to allow the

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marchers through. It was very much a cockshy, and the detail would require
renewment; but the interesting point was that Bingham did not reject out of hand the
idea of the Order parading the Garvaghy Road with the express permission of the
residents. (The acid test, of course, would be whether McKenna proved to be
similarly disposed. Somehow, on that point I have my doubts.)

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