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## Some allegations inappropriate admits McIlveen case detective

By Staff Reporter

15/01/2009

A DETECTIVE who helped interview one of those accused of murdering Ballymena schoolboy Michael

McIlveen accepted yesterday that some of the allegations put to the then 15-year-old about his involvement were wrong.

The detective accepted that his conduct towards the boy's solicitor and parents had been "totally inappropriate".

Detective Constable John McKee told Antrim Crown Court he had simply been acting on information supplied to him by other police officers.

He rejected defence claims that his interviewing techniques had been designed to crank up the pressure.

Mr McKee said that when interviewing the now 18-year-old Christopher Andrew McLeister of Knock Crescent in Ballymena he had not deliberately set out to intimidate the teenager.

"I didn't think I was being oppressive and my authorities didn't think I was being oppressive," he said.

Mr McKee was being cross-examined by Paul Ramsey QC, defending Mr McLeister.

Mr McLeister denies involvement in the murder of 15-year-old Michael, who died in hospital on May 8 2006 of head injuries.

Mr Ramsey initially put it to the detective that Mr McLeister, then aged 15, had been interviewed 14 times over two days and that the teenager had been cooperative and respectful and had answered all questions.

The detective said he was satisfied that he had carried out the eight hours of interviews "fairly" and that it was important that the allegations he put to the accused were "accurate".

The officer accepted that, while the evidence of the main eyewitness made no reference to Mr McLeister kicking Michael, the opposite had been put to the schoolboy.

"It is difficult to see how anybody could say McLeister was kicking" Michael, Mr Ramsey said after outlining the various references made to the defendant by the eyewitness.

"On the basis of that document it is difficult," the detective said.

He said that the allegations he had put to Mr McLeister as coming from the eyewitness had been based on briefings the detective had been given by other senior police and that he had noted on "scraps of paper... a bit of photocopy paper".

Mr McKee said he "was obviously briefed that Christopher McLeister kicked the deceased" and that he "assumed that when given a briefing that it is accurate".

He said it was “not my practice to question another officer’s briefing” and that he “interviewed the man [McLeister] with the information I had at the time”.

Mr McKee maintained that what he had done “was done innocently” and that he would not knowingly put “false information” to a suspect because he was “not going to leave myself open”.

Later he told Mr Justice Treacy he could not explain why senior officers monitoring the interview had not drawn to his or anyone else’s attention that what was being put to Mr McLeister was wrong.

“If I made a mistake it was an honest mistake, if that’s the right way of putting it,” the detective said.

Mr Ramsey suggested that the detective had been abusive towards Mr McLeister’s solicitor and wrong when he had threatened the boy’s father with expulsion from the interview room.

“I have said it and, if I was wrong in saying it, I apologise now. I can’t turn the clock back now,” Mr McKee said.

Later Mr Justice Treacy intervened, telling the detective that his dealings with Mr McLeister’s mother had been “totally inappropriate”.

“Yes, my lord,” Mr McKee said.


“It was said. There is nothing I can do about that now.”

The detective said that, notwithstanding this, he “carried out the interviews to the best of my ability with information that I had in my possession at that time” and that his task was not to intimidate but to “get at the truth”.

The trial continues.

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