

FROM: PETER MAY  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
28 January 1994

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31 JAN 1994  
C.C.P.U.

cc PS/Mr Fell - B  
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B  
Mr Legge - B  
Mr Williams - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Daniell - B  
Mr Brooker - B  
Mr Canavan - B  
Mr Kyle - B

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PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B

**DRUMCREE FAITH AND JUSTICE GROUP**

I visited Portadown on 27 January and met a small group involved in the Drumcree Faith and Justice Group including Father Brian Lennon, Jesuit Priest, Rev David Shillingworth, Church of Ireland Minister, and Michael McCooe, Chairman of Drumcree Faith and Justice Group and full-time worker for the Drumcree Co-operative. All are deeply involved in community relations. Most of our discussion focussed on the Joint Declaration and where we might go from here, and I record the main points below, not least because they represent a non-party political view.

David Shillingworth

2. Rev Shillingworth, whose parish includes the strongly Loyalist area of Killycomain, had the following observations about Unionist approaches to the Declaration:

- much of Unionist opinion had been unstirred by the Joint Declaration. There was an apathy in working-class areas about any new initiative. No-one had reacted since the Anglo-Irish Agreement, reflecting the deep disillusionment and distrust that existed of Government since that time;

- he had however been surprised at the interest in 'peace' - and the willingness to countenance change to bring it about;
- he was not aware of any underlying discontent at the terms of the Declaration, which he personally believed safeguarded the Unionist position;
- the infighting between the two Unionist parties did not appear to be having a significant effect on the ground. The DUP meeting in Portadown had excited relatively little attention, although the Euro Elections would bring the difference within the Unionist family into sharper focus;
- Shillingworth did not believe Unionists would be too deeply affected were the Government to enter negotiations with Sinn Fein even before they ended violence. Most people believed Government was still in contact with Sinn Fein, following the revelations last November. He said people would be amazed were some channel not being used to ensure Sinn Fein had the clarification they appeared to want;

#### Comment

The overriding impression he gave was that apathy ruled. Government could not be trusted, and had time and again betrayed Unionism. Further betrayals would therefore not be a surprise, and provided local people did not ultimately feel the Government had gone too far and thereby substituted anger for apathy, he saw little prospect of change. Overall he did not believe the UUP had much to fear as a result of accepting the Declaration.

#### Father Brian Lennon

3. Lennon had a clearly Nationalist perspective, but was, interestingly, far from certain that Sinn Fein were serious in talking of peace.

- Lennon believed that Sinn Fein's bluff should be called. Even if they wanted to talk about amnesties or other second-order issues, Government would, he believed, lose nothing from entering such negotiations, even before violence had been renounced. Only then would we know if Sinn Fein were serious;
- the attitude of the Provisionals would be determined by psychology rather than the content of the Joint Declaration. The Prime Minister's comments since its signing had largely negated the joint approach. In addition, many Nationalists saw little in the Joint Declaration for them (although Lennon disagreed, believing the focus on self-determination had been altered);
- Lennon was relatively pessimistic about the prospects for acceptance. The clarification issue gave Sinn Fein a way out, and both he and McCooe believed they could carry their people with them on that issue;
- there was some scepticism about future political talks, but Lennon focussed particularly on the need for some change to the security arrangements in tandem with political ones. The RUC were never going to be acceptable in South Armagh. Interestingly, however, he now believed it possible they could ultimately be accepted in Portadown - a view which he did not hold some five years ago. [Comment: Lennon was short on specifics but groping towards a Mallon-type analysis of the need for a security dimension to any political settlement.]

#### Michael McCooe

4. McCooe was the most pessimistic of those I spoke to, believing the Government needed to act now in order to avoid a lengthy period of sustained violence.



- If clarification were not given, the Provisionals would use that as the excuse for rejecting the Declaration. That would probably lead to a further five years of terrorism;
- there was a lack of trust and confidence in HMG among Republicans. Ameliorating that should be the purpose of clarification. The Declaration itself offered nothing to Nationalists. Even McGrady had made that point;
- the reluctance to imagine change and the effects that would have in wide-reaching areas was holding back the process. Sinn Fein needed help to overcome that lack of vision.

#### Comment

5. Inevitably these views are far from representative. It is not clear that clarification does provide a satisfactory way out for Sinn Fein to justify rejecting the JD in the long term. On that basis they could only reject the Declaration on the basis of not understanding it completely - rather than on the basis of what it said. The point about the psychology of the Provisional Movement is of course not new, but it is interesting that Lennon and McCooe believed HMG's attitude was as important as what it said. That attitude was currently perceived to be hostile to Republicanism.

6. I explained HMG's position on clarification, pointing to the balanced treatment that had recently been accorded to the Declaration, the attempts to ensure everyone understood the Declaration, and the difficulties of entering the type of substantive negotiations the Provisionals appeared to want in advance of a cessation. However, Rev Shillingworth did not believe there would be a Unionist reaction even under the scenario painted by Lennon, a view which I do not believe to be reflective of the wider Unionist community.

[signed PM]

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