

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

MINUTES OF MEETING TO DISCUSS WAY FORWARD ON PARADES ISSUE. HELD IN DIRECTOR (SECURITY)'S OFFICE ON 21 FEBRUARY AT 1600 HOURS

26/2/2
C.C.R.U.

Distribution: Those present
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Legge
Mr Leach

PA - Parades file

Those present:

Mr Steele, Chairman
Mr Watkins
Mr Perry
Mr Maccabe
Mr Canavan
Ms McGimpsey, Secretary

Mr. Canavan's comments
which I passed to you
yesterday a file..
27/2
28/2
2..

Following the meeting on parades with Sir John Wheeler on 9 February, this follow-up meeting was held to discuss how to take forward the parades question. Mr Steele opened the meeting by reviewing the Minister's comments and asking for views on how his wishes might be carried forward.

2. The most contentious parades were likely to be those in the Ormeau Road, Garvaghy Road and Londonderry; Duncairn Gardens in Belfast could also be difficult. The first controversial parade (Ormeau Road) takes place at Easter; any programme of action therefore needed to be implemented as quickly as possible. It was agreed that the issue might best be tackled on three levels - security, political and local levels.

Security

3. While not solely a security issue there was no doubt that the problem had a significant security dimension. The operational handling of parades was a matter for the police; but given the

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political implications, Ministers would wish to keep closely in touch with RUC thinking, both on their likely approach to particular parades, and on issues such as the timing of decisions to re-route. The meeting agreed that SCM/SPM provided the appropriate mechanism for doing this.

4. The meeting noted the fact that the RUC could invite the Secretary of State to ban parades, and also the political sensitivities of such a step. The Secretary of State was unlikely to wish to ban a parade without having been requested to do so by the Chief Constable. In practical terms there was little difference between a ban and a decision to re-route, and while a ban could in some circumstances be used to signal HMG's support for the police, this could be done in other ways (see below).

Political

5. The efforts which the RUC and others had been making over recent months to encourage compromise showed very little sign of success. It would be helpful, therefore, if Ministers were to do what they could to mobilise the good will of political and community leaders to bring influence to bear on those most directly involved to reach an accommodation.

6. This might involve three elements:

- a. a series of unpublicised meetings between the Minister of State and organisations like the Orange Order and the Apprentice Boys, including prominent figures such as Martin Smyth. This could be accompanied by the Secretary of State and other Ministers using their regular contacts with political parties and Church leaders to raise the issue and ask them to encourage compromise. The Irish might also be encouraged to use their influence with Sinn Fein;

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- b. a speech by the Secretary of State at some suitable opportunity calling for accommodation, respect for other traditions and an awareness of the feelings of local communities;
- c. advice to the Prime Minister inviting him to raise the parades issue with the party leaders, particularly David Trimble, to remind them of the risk of serious trouble destabilising the political situation; and inviting them to assist in defusing tension.

Annex A is a list of options for constructive action by Ministers and officials.

Local

7. Mr Steele reported that Mediation Network had undertaken to come back to him with their thoughts on what, in their view, Ministers should/could be doing to assist the situation. This should be followed up. The meeting also noted the work which the ~~Country~~ Relations Council has in hand on voluntary codes of practice. Anything which could be done to assist the work of these groups would be worthwhile.

Next Steps

8. Mr Steele would circulate for comment a draft submission to Sir John Wheeler on the way ahead.

[signed]

J MCGIMPSEY
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ANNEX A

PARADES - WAY FORWARD

MENU OF OPTIONS

Security

- Continue to influence RUC and support RUC through SPM/SCM.
- Continue to liaise closely with RUC.
- Reinforce support of RUC mediation with groups involved.

Political

- Prime Minister to contact David Trimble (and Ian Paisley) to encourage him to use his influence for satisfactory outcome.
- Agree speech for Secretary of State to show understanding and concern and desire for satisfactory outcome.
- Continue to influence political leaders on all sides.

Local Levels

- Involvement by Church Leaders.
- Mediation Network - support and push for views on Ministerial responsibilities.
- Quakers - support and push for information.

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