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-5 JUN 1997  
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FROM: S J LEACH  
ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR POLICING AND SECURITY

5 JUNE 1997

DESK IMMEDIATE

- cc Mr Steele
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Stephens
- Mr Wood (B & L)
- Mr Buchanan (by D/R)
- Mrs Brown
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Perry
- Mr Smyth

MR WATKINS

TASK FORCE FOR PORTADOWN

It was agreed at the Parades Co-ordinating Group yesterday that I would aim to get a submission into the weekend box on the lines of my minute of 3 June. Since you had reservations about the proposed multi-agency initiative for Portadown, I agreed that the submission would seek authorisation for a **scoping** study of this proposal, rather than for the establishment of the initiative itself. I attach a rather hasty draft of how the submission might cover this aspect, and should be very grateful to know if you (and copy recipients) are content with this (and also of course for any comments or proposed amendments). Many thanks.

[sgd]

*URGENT*

*p - can liaise with  
IC over this? It goes  
far too wide - it should*

S J LEACH  
Ext: 27012

*avoid economic programmes  
+ focus on CR alone*

*cc Mr Buchanan  
could you discuss  
please?*

*SS  
5/6*

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*1  
5.6*

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/DRAFT

## PORTADOWN INITIATIVE

It is clear that the root cause of the conflict over the Garvaghy Road is the profound sectarianism which is endemic in Portadown. Protestants, fearful about the sustainability of their ethnic identity, want to reassert their control over territory which they have "lost", while Catholics feel excluded from the town centre and retaliate by seeking to exclude Protestants from an area where they are in the majority. These insecurities colour issues of economic and social provision as well as the political and policing agenda.

2. The extent of sectarianism in Portadown is demonstrated not only by such events as the murder of Robert Hamill but also by, for example, the emerging finding from the Parades Commission's programme of contacts that there is a virtual absence of cross-community activity. In addition, the RUC is considering whether to put in a formal request for the erection of "peace line"-type structures in the town, to address concerns about security by enforcing a physical separation between the two communities. (This would be a significant and highly symbolic move; with one minor exception in Derry, there are currently no "peace line"-type barriers outside Belfast.)

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3. There is therefore a clear and urgent need to **rebuild community relations** in Portadown, to avoid the increasing cantonisation of the town and the prospect of further Drumcree stand-offs stretching into the future, and to provide an example for other divided communities in Northern Ireland. The Government would be well placed to kick-start work on regenerating community relations through a committed multi-agency initiative to tackle this fundamental problem. Ministers might, for example, establish a **task force** with the remit of imaginatively targeting resources and programmes at those areas and issues in which results are best calculated to restore confidence and stability and create cross-community activity. It would be presentationally important for such a task force to have some new money at its disposal, although its main lever would be the ability to focus and reprioritise existing programmes in such a way as to maximise conflict resolution and community development. These should probably include economic programmes : while there is no simplistic relationship between economic disadvantage and community division, access to the economic development menu would enable Ministers to demonstrate much more easily that the initiative can produce tangible benefits. To emphasise the priority Government attaches to this effort, the task force might answer directly to a "Minister for Portadown", on the analogy of the "Minister for Merseyside" role taken on by Michael Heseltine in the aftermath of the 1981 riots.

Which? Surely not many - CCNU, CMC, RUC, ? DSW/SEB

Which programmes?

Which!

ho - see Clavin ITWA reference

???

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4. An initiative on these lines would respond to the message which the Parades Commission has received from many of its interlocutors in Portadown that some imaginative development with real political commitment behind it is desperately needed if the town is to emerge from the atmosphere of hatred and insecurity in which it is currently sunk. An announcement that the Government was seeking to address these fundamental divisions would demonstrate that Ministers were not simply interested in a quick fix to resolve the problems of this summer, but were looking for lasting progress which would help ensure stability for many summers to come. Thus, even though the task force would clearly not produce any concrete results before this summer's march on 6 July, its establishment before then could have a very positive effect on morale, and on wider perceptions of the situation, by demonstrating that the Government was seized of the basic issue and was determined to stick with it in the long term to achieve a resolution.

5. The feasibility and precise parameters of this initiative would require further scoping, to ensure that the optimum package could be prepared for announcement by Ministers, with no risk that the move could be dismissed as a PR stunt. If the Secretary of State wished to pursue this idea, therefore, we would propose a rapid **scoping study** involving Central Secretariat, the Community Relations Council, the RUC, and the Policing and Security Directorate. This scoping study would report back by [20 June] with firm proposals, to enable an

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announcement to be made (if the Secretary of State so decided) in the same time envelope as the Chief Constable's decision on the Drumcree parade.

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