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FROM: P N BELL
BRITISH SECRETARY
11 July 1997

ASST SEC 16 JUL 1997
CENT SEC

cc: PS/Secretary of State
PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Sir David Fell
Mr Thomas
Mr Watkins
Mr Leach
Mr Stephens
Mr Beeton
Mrs Brown
Mr Brooker
Mrs Collins
Mr Hill
Mr Maccabe
Mr Perry
Mr Priestly
Mr Warner
Ms Healey
Mr Fisher
Mrs Osborne
HMA, Dublin
Mr Lamont

C

PA Parades file.

[Handwritten signature]
12/7.

MR STEELE

TWO CHEERS FOR THE ORANGE ORDER - AN IRISH REACTION

We are all now familiar with the Taoiseach's moderate response to the prudent and courageous decision of the Orange Order not to try and force a number of controversial marches tomorrow. That welcome is also extended by my colleagues here at Maryfield. More important, perhaps, is the almost tangible sense of relief - which began with the confirmation, by you, shortly before midnight last night that the immediate threat had lifted (although both we and the Irish know there are still some potentially tricky marches ahead, Newtownbutler, Dunloy...).

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In following up the Orange Order's decision, I have stressed in talking to my Irish colleague, first, the real credit that must go to the Order itself - as well as to those within it, such as Messrs Bingham and Watson, who despite earlier setbacks have nevertheless tirelessly persisted in seeking honourable and non-violent accommodations. I have also emphasised the efforts of the Chief Constable, and his readiness, as you explained to me, to draw forcibly to the attention of the Order the potentially catastrophic consequences of insisting on their right to march in the most controversial locations. I have also tried to explain that, in our assessment, that the decision that the Order has taken would not have been possible if they had not been allowed to march at the Garvaghy Road last weekend and without the tireless pressure of the Secretary of State over the summer to promote reasonable and fair compromises. But although I have made it clear that in our view the Orange Order would not have chosen the course they have without those earlier efforts (or the earlier march), I have not claimed that what has happened was the result of some deep strategy (give them Garvaghy and they will not take the Lower Ormeau etc); nor have I tried to over-egg the role of the Secretary of State at the expense of the real achievements (this week of the Chief Constable. What is important is that an I claimed) outcome has been secured, (without any help from the Residents' Associations) for which we can all be sincerely thankful.

This explanation, devoid of any traces of political vainglory, appears to have gone down reasonably well here. Needless to say, David Donogue is not inclined to see any virtue, wrongly in my view, in last Sunday's march at Drumcree; nor, like colleagues in Dublin, is he temperamentally disposed to accord bouquets to the

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Secretary of State. I have emphasised, however, that his political masters would be ill-advised to strike a grudging note when they next meet their British opposite numbers, probably next Wednesday, and even less well advised to adopt, as I recognise they have wisely not done so far, anything that could be misconstrued as a triumphalist attitude on their part. Even if the Irish cannot bring themselves to say this in public (and I personally do not see why not), I have nevertheless strongly urged the Irish to remind one section of their "constituents" that Orange self-restraint is something they could well emulate.... The point was taken (and now reflected in Mr Burke's statement which I am circulating separately).

At some point, before too long, perhaps Mr Maccabe on his return from leave, I see advantage in someone better informed than I taking my Irish colleagues through the organisation and politics of the Orange Order. They are far too inclined to see it as being more monolithic than it is, and in schematic terms: moderates at the higher levels; exclusively hard-liners at local levels. And to see Mr Trimble as in some way the conductor of his "Orange Orchestra". In that context, I was asked about what the likely effect would be of the Order's decision on Unionist politics generally. My personal view, I explained, was that while I saw no direct link between what had happened and the Talks Process, the fact that the cause of honourable compromise had achieved one significant victory, might make "compromise" less of a dirty word in wider Unionist circles - and thereby, in the longer run, give Mr Trimble greater room for manoeuvre. It is not, however, I fear, as my other minuting (not to all) explains, so far encouraged the Irish to be more generous for the time-being in regards to Mr Trimble's proposals on

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decommissioning. But I hope that Tuesday's Liaison Group, as well as other developments in hand, may facilitate an honourable accommodation here also by the time Ministers' next engage on Wednesday.

Signed:

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