

Reith - Copy to file 253/95
(File on Protocol (PSEP File))
and 104/96 - as suggested by
CONFIDENTIAL Mr. Giddens

7/1/96
Mr. Giddens
2.1

FROM: D J WATKINS
D/CENT SEC
DATE: 1 AUGUST 1996

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP, B&L) - B
PS/Michael Ancram (DENI, B&L) - B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED, DANI&L) - B
PS/Mr Moss (DOE, DHSS&L) - B
PS/PUS (B&L) - B
PS/Sir David Fell - B
NI Permanent Secretaries
Mr Thomas - B
Mr Bell - B
Mr Cowan
Mr Leach - B
Mr Wood (B&L) - B
Mr Hill - B
Mr Stephens - B
Mr McCusker, DOE
Mr Maccabe - B
Mr Murphy, DOE
Mrs Devlin

1) Enclage - To see please for information.
As a minimum of which New
helps shall go on your 'West B' fest
Festival file.

Brin West by's minutes 1/8
relate to current
community relations. There is

a file 'Contact with Community Leaders' 104/96,
might that be suitable with a cross ref in the
Grey book?

2) Reith - for filing as directed. 1/8

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) - B

Mr Giddens

WEST BELFAST FESTIVAL

1. Thank you for your minute of yesterday.
2. I would respectfully but strongly advise the Secretary of State against paying a visit to the Festival, and do so after consulting a number of colleagues including PAB. I suggest that it is highly unlikely that such a visit would do anything to counter recent criticisms of HMG. The Festival is a very intense celebration of West Belfast and often, though by no means wholly, Republican values and my clear impression is that its organisers and supporters would probably resent intrusion from a Minister. A visit would either, in my view, be regarded as tokenist and intrusive, with a probability of the Secretary of State becoming embroiled in a series of televised rows and demonstrations over last month's events; or he would be confronted with a situation where he would find it extremely difficult to avoid being televised shaking the hand of Gerry Adams who in the past has been fairly closely associated

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with the Festival. And the opposite effect on Unionists would be negative too.

3. Second, I have just received some promotional literature about the Festival. This gratuitously and in wholly Sinn Fein language criticises HMG (though it is worth adding that after the last month the use of Sinn Fein speak can now be expected to be widespread and should not be taken necessarily to denote active support). The critical part reads:

'Last year we celebrated the first ever Festival in a conflict-free atmosphere. The people of West Belfast, perhaps more than any other area, have a vital interest in securing a just and lasting peace. The Irish Peace Process created that opportunity. We are therefore saddened and dismayed that the British Government squandered and abused this opportunity. We would hope that the Peace Process can be rebuilt on the basis of inclusion, equality and democracy. We share the hope that a lasting peace, based on justice, can be achieved.'

4. This alone gives a flavour of the sort of atmosphere, doubtless now widespread in Nationalist areas, which Sir Patrick would be entering and the sort of polemic that he would face in potentially acutely embarrassing circumstances.
5. The Secretary of State should also know that the News Letter has been inquiring about assistance from various public agencies to the Festival (along with other private sector sponsors such as NIE and BT). This funding was aimed of course at various economic, social and cultural outputs and was not provided to sustain the sort of political diatribe used in the publicity material. Departments have taken the line of explaining the specific purpose behind the limited financial assistance involved and pointed out that they had no control over the editorial policy behind publicity material for the Festival. But the News Letter's enquiry, clearly aimed at a

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story critical of HMG, is some advance evidence of the much more severe criticism which would be directed at Ministers if Sir Patrick were to pay a visit.

[Signed: DJW]

D J WATKINS

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cc
Mr Secretary
Mr Holmes
Mr Cowan
Mr Jordan

DESK IMMEDIATE

FROM: PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B)
31 July 1996

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir John Wheeler (DFP,B&L) - B
- PS/Michael Ancram (DENI,B&L) - B
- PS/Baroness Denton (DED,DANI&L) - B
- PS/Mr Moss (DHSS,DOE&L) - B
- PS/PUS (B&L) - B
- PS/Sir David Fell - B
- NI Perm Secs
- Mr Thomas - B
- Mr Watkins - B
- Mr Hill - B
- Mr Leach - B
- Mr Stephens - B
- Mr Bell - B
- Mr Cowan, DOE
- Mr McCusker, DOE
- Mr Maccabe - B
- Mrs Brown - B
- Mr Murphy

ASST/ SEC 9/8
C.S.R.U.

Mr Watkins - B

Mr Solomon

WEST BELFAST FESTIVAL

The Secretary of State was very grateful to see a copy of Brian Murphy's minute of 24 July 1996 to Mr Cowan, which provided a summary of soundings on community reaction to events arising out of Drumcree as picked up on the MBW/area teams network. The Secretary of State wonders whether he should visit the West Belfast festival and whether this would be of benefit in dealing with the negative impact on opinion I am seeking security advice separately. As the festival begins on 3 August, I should be grateful for urgent advice.

Signed

ROBERT CRAWFORD
Private Secretary