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CLLR. BRIAN FEENEY

*cc Mr O'Donnell
Secretariat
B. 7/5. 27/6.*

15 June 1989

Mr Hugh Annesley

Chief Constable

RUC

RUC Headquarters

Knock Road

Belfast 5

Dear Mr Annesley,

I am writing to you in my capacity as party whip in Belfast on the subject of loyalist parades in Belfast.

Last year I took up this issue with ACC Belfast and the NIO, but in the end the decision on an especially provocative parade along Duncairn Gardens was taken by the Chief Constable so this time I am writing directly to you.

There are three main areas where provocative parades occur: on the Crumlin Rd. between Holy Cross monastery and Ardoyne; along Cliftonpark Ave., Cliftonville Rd., Antrim Rd. and Duncairn Gardens, and the lower Ormeau Rd.

If I may take the Crumlin Rd. first. This has been a major flashpoint for many years - indeed the point where British troops were deployed 20 years ago. For a time parades were banned here but in the mid-eighties they have been permitted again. There is absolutely no reason to permit a parade down the Crumlin Rd. at this point; any parade could easily be rerouted down the Woodvale Rd. and back onto the Crumlin Rd. where it is totally loyalist.

Permitting a parade along the Crumlin Rd. past Ardoyne involves sealing off all Ardoyne for hours in advance of the parade. This part of the Crumlin Rd. is now exclusively nationalist on both sides and indeed there is no access onto what was the loyalist side until Cambrai St. Sealing off Ardoyne and inconveniencing the whole Catholic population so that a loyalist parade can prove it can be allowed march is and always was unacceptable; particularly in this case when the danger was acknowledged and parades banned. I would therefore ask that no parades ever be allowed along this route.

The second case, Cliftonpark Avenue/ Duncairn Gardens should not be permitted again. This route was marched traditionally every two years, the first in one direction, the next in the

opposite direction. It is always possible to force a parade through with enough manpower and that has happened every year since 1986. What has also happened has been major rioting following the parade, beginning as the last Land Rovers start to withdraw.

There has been a major population movement here in the last decade so that the whole of the lower Antrim Rd. is now Catholic, as is the Cliftonville Rd. The parade was allowed its traditional route in June 1986 and rioting began soon after which escalated in the following weeks into the worst sectarian rioting in Belfast since the seventies. Ultimately Manor St. was closed and barricaded. In a very weak decision in September 1987 a non-traditional parade, purportedly to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Covenant skirted Manor St. but followed the rest of the route; rioting resulted again. In 1988 despite strenuous representations the parade went ahead again and three days riots in Duncairn Gardens ensued.

To force the parade through requires sealing off parts of the Catholic areas from 6.00 a.m. on the day of the parade. Later the whole of the lower Antrim Rd. is closed off, most of Brookvale and parts of Cliftonville - all Catholic - so that a Protestant march can come through their area. This is completely intolerable. To cap it the last march coincided with Mass in Holy Family church nearby, but screens prevented many people attending. It was an appalling decision which incensed people with its injustice apart from the disruption to their lives. Incidentally, if it had not been for a casual remark by a British soldier the people whose lives were disrupted that day would not have known what was happening until the first band appeared. Due to the huge demographic changes no loyalist parades should be allowed along this route, and certainly not along Duncairn Gardens, the most dangerous interface in the North.

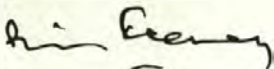
In his letter to me last September about this parade Mr Ian Stewart, M.P., Minister of State wrote that the Chief Constable's advice was that there would have been widespread rioting in north Belfast had the parade been rerouted. I reject that completely. There is no evidence to support that assertion, but what we do know is that serious rioting broke out at 8.45 p.m. at Lepper St. and continued sporadically for three days and many incidents occurred at the Manor St. interface throughout that weekend. Did the Chief Constable mean he was prepared to accept serious rioting in nationalist areas of north Belfast? (Rhetorical question).

The third route is the lower Ormeau Rd. Again large scale demographic changes have turned the lower Ormeau Rd. into an exclusively nationalist area. Again, traditionally, loyalist parades have regularly walked along the road for all kinds of reasons. Now the streets have name plates in Irish. In order for parades to pass off peacefully a seal is put on this now Catholic area, but particularly tight on the side backing onto

the river. People here cannot come out in any direction for hours before a major parade. Their only access is by way of the Ormeau Rd. An alternative route is available along the Ravenhill Rd. which has the added advantage of avoiding the Markets.

I am sorry this letter is so long and detailed but I feel on such important matters it is better to present as much background as possible. I would be glad to discuss any matters relating to any points raised in this letter with you or any of your senior officers. I hope you can accede to the requests made and thereby avoid deep feelings of injustice, the disruption to lives and the inevitable riots.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Brian Feeney', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Brian Feeney.