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## Portadown Parades

I spoke with Bríd Rodgers about parades taking place in her area around the Twelfth of July. The following are her comments:

### Church Parade, 9 July

The traditional orange church parade on the Sunday before the 12th July has always given trouble. In the past, the Orangemen marched up through the nationalist Obins Street to the Church, giving rise to a great deal of resentment and friction. In the last two years this march has been re-routed to the Northway (Corcraín Road), the more direct route, which is at the back of Obins Street in the loyalist section of the town. The result has been an easing of a great deal of tension. However, Bríd Rodgers is unhappy that the marchers, instead of coming back down the Northway, are permitted by the RUC to return by the Garvaghy Road. The timing of the return trip to the town centre between noon and 1 p.m., when many nationalists are around, causes friction. Mrs. Rodgers had asked the RUC to avoid Garvaghy and direct the marchers to the Northway which is by far the most direct route.

### 11th July Bonfire in Portadown

In the past, the 11th bonfire in an open space near the nationalist area in Portadown gave rise to trouble. Last year she said the RUC handled the event very well and forced the loyalists to behave themselves. She hopes the RUC will provide the same amount of policing for that venue this year. However, she will be impressing on the RUC the need to protect a nationalist block of flats near the bonfire site.

### 12th July Parade in Portadown

While the RUC ensured that no incidents arose at this parade during the past two years, it still retains an element of danger because the marchers are allowed to parade down nationalist Garvaghy Road. Nationalists are confined to their houses during

the march by the RUC. When the parade was re-routed away from the Tunnel and Obins Street in 1986 the RUC Chief Constable, Jack Hermon, said that he would permit them, <sup>as</sup> an interim step, to march along the still nationalist but more open Garvaghy Road. He indicated that his purpose was to totally re-route loyalist parades out of nationalist areas over time. Mrs. Rodgers feels it is now time to move the march from Garvaghy to the Northway route which is much more direct from the Orange Hall to the town centre.

Last year the RUC said they instructed the parade organisers that only local bands playing non-sectarian music would be allowed into Garvaghy. However, the most hardline loyalist "kick-the-Pope" band "The True Blues" headed the parade last year, provocatively carried a large Union Jack at the head of the parade and played sectarian tunes.

She will also speak to the RUC about this but she would like us to take this, and the other matters mentioned above, up with the British side.

#### Lurgan

She has had no further complaints about the Friday night band rehearsals in Lurgan town since we raised the matter through the Secretariat. She expects the "12th" parade there to go off without incident.

  
Liam Canniffe

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