



## An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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AN ROINN GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA  
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9 January 1990

Padraig Collins  
Secretariat  
Belfast

Dear Padraig

Brian Feeney has asked us to raise the issue of the latest "peace wall" being constructed in Belfast at Alliance Avenue. I enclose a map and have marked the site of the wall in red ink.

As you can see, this latest wall is designed to separate the Ardoyne from the Protestant enclave near Ballysillan playing fields and is a response to the never-ending demographic war in North Belfast.

As you know, the basic picture in North Belfast is of continuing Catholic expansion from their traditional strongholds of the Ardoyne and the New Lodge, both of which are effectively "bursting at the seams". This is matched by continuing Protestant flight northwards towards Glengormley, Rathcoole etc.

The new wall at Alliance Avenue is in response to requests from the Protestant side and marks the latest, and apparently futile, attempt to put a halt to this process. I toured the area recently and I use the word futile because the roads on the Protestant side of the wall - Alliance Drive, Parade and Gardens only partially exist at present, with up to 30% of the houses derelict or bricked up, while another 30% have forlorn "For Sale" signs prominently displayed. In other words, an attempt is being made to close the stable door after the horse has bolted. The vast majority of Protestants in the area have either left or are planning to leave in the near future. As a result, the net effect of the wall will not be to arrest the process of Protestant flight which is already well underway, but rather to wall in the Catholics in the Ardoyne.

This is the core of Feeney's objection to the wall which he sees as another attempt to box in the Catholics of North Belfast. He feels the attempt will prove to be futile in that, given the enormous pressure of Catholics in the Ardoyne looking for housing, in time "they will work a flanker around the wall" as

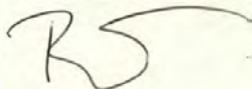
they have already done in relation to a number of the walls built in the 1970's.

Feeney's more immediate concern is the manner in which the wall is being built and the complete absence of any consultation with local representatives prior to its construction. At this stage, a temporary corrugated fence has been put in place. On the Protestant side, most of Alliance Crescent and a substantial proportion of Alliance Parade are derelict with a number of houses extensively vandalised. In addition, a sort of crescent shaped loop road is being built which will be adjacent to the new wall and will link the top of Alliance Crescent with the middle of Alliance Parade. As a result, there is at least a few tons of loose bricks available as ammunition for loyalist yahoos who nightly chuck substantial amounts of this ammunition at the rear of the Catholic houses in Alliance Avenue. Feeney's argument, which seems very justified, is that the Housing Executive should immediately demolish the derelict houses and cart away the rubble and work on this new loop road should be speeded up. (His own information is that work on this road could take up to 4 months.)

Incidentally, Feeney understands that the finance for this work will come from the DOE's share of the "Making Belfast Work Programme". To my knowledge, this is the second such wall being constructed under this programme - as reported previously (my report of 11 April 1989 refers), the new wall beside the Brookfield Mill on the Crumlin Road was also built under this programme. (The Manor Street interface wall has also been quite tastefully landscaped recently under this programme.)

I would be grateful if you could query the other side as to the reasoning behind the construction of this new interface wall and raise with them Feeney's representations regarding the way the job is being carried out, which leaves a plentiful supply of bricks and rubble for nightly attacks on the homes of the residents of Alliance Avenue.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in dark ink, consisting of a stylized 'B' and 'M' joined together.

Brendan McMahon



