



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

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Parades/Marching Season

SPEAKING POINTS

1. Obviously we are all relieved that the marching season has so far been uneventful and peaceful. It is only right that we should recognise here the considerable effort that the RUC have put into this exercise in recent years and the progress that has been made in the direction of the more effective and impartial policing of parades.
2. There are, however, two particular cases that I feel I should raise with you; these are the parades at Duncairn Gardens and Portadown. The fact that these parades may have passed off peacefully should not be taken to mean that all is well and that there have not been negative consequences for the relationship between the nationalist community and the security forces in the areas in question. Brian Feeney's correspondence on the Duncairn Garden situation, for instance, gives a clear indication of the extent of local resentment at the failure to designate an alternative routing for the parade, which would bring it away from areas where it was unwelcome.
3. Both of us agree, I believe - as did our predecessors - on the principle that parades should not go where they are not welcome. This principle makes absolute sense. Otherwise, a colourful occasion can quickly change into an exercise in coat-trailing and intimidation. The decisions in respect of Duncairn Gardens and Portadown, ignoring as they did very significant local opposition on the nationalist side, unfortunately failed to meet this principle.
4. The fact that these two parades passed off peacefully should not make us as complacent about the future. It would be very helpful, therefore, if the Duncairn Gardens and Portadown parades could be reviewed again with a view to seeing whether in future years the principle that parades should not go where they are unwelcome might also be implemented in these cases.

Marching Season - Background Note

While this year's marching season passed off without serious incident, there were two particular marches which caused a problem - Duncairn Gardens and Portadown.

Duncairn Gardens:

This is a march which takes place every two years and uses a route which passes through an area of north Belfast which has seen major demographic change in recent years. Part of the route passes through what was a loyalist area, but which is now staunchly nationalist. In addition, it also passes through Duncairn gardens itself which is perhaps the most dangerous sectarian interface in Belfast - being the dividing line between the republican New Lodge and the loyalist Tigers Bay. [In fact, the area is so dangerous that a month before the march the RUC erected security barriers on two of the streets leading into Duncairn Gardens (Leper Street and Adam Street)].

Portadown:

Some years ago the Loyalists were denied the use of the Obins Street route - something which led to some of the worst loyalist rioting in recent years. Instead of Obins Street, the loyalists were allowed to route their march through the Garvaghy Road in Portadown - an area which is 100% nationalist. This is notwithstanding the fact that other and more convenient routes are available which would skirt the nationalist areas of Portadown.

Comment:

Strong Representations were made in the Secretariat in relation to both of these marches. However, the RUC permitted both marches to go ahead on the basis that they will apparently only re-route a parade if they are convinced that there is a serious risk of public disorder. This of course involves a massive security operation, the effect of which is to box-in the nationalists within their own area in order to allow the orangemen to trail their coats through a nationalist area. This is a cause of deep resentment to nationalists and has a very serious impact on

relations between the RUC and the community.

Many nationalists see this as an exercise whereby the RUC make their decision on the basis of weighing up the level of threat from either side. In other words, if the RUC were to deny the Orangemen these particular routes, they perceive a likelihood of serious public disorder from the loyalists. By the same token, if nationalists were to indicate that they would forcefully object to the march by rioting, this might serve to change the RUC's mind. In this situation, constitutional nationalists feel that their representations carry little weight with the RUC who are solely concerned with the likelihood of public disorder.

In our representations we have stressed the point that while we can appreciate the RUC's concern with criteria related to public order, in these cases this appears to have been the sole concern and that the RUC's decision in these cases ignored the basic principle laid down by the Secretary of State in the House of Commons in June 1986 that parades should not take place in an area or along a route where they are not welcome.

Suggested line of approach:

While the other side can be congratulated that the marching season passed off peacefully, it should be pointed out that in the cases of Portadown and Duncairn Gardens, this was achieved at a significant price in terms of relations between the RUC and the local nationalist communities involved. Our concern could be conveyed that the RUC, in its decision making process on the routing of parades, give the appearance of ignoring the important principle that marches should not take place in areas where they are clearly not welcome.

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CLL. BRIAN FEENEY

27 June 1990
Mr Hugh Annesley
Chief Constable
Brooklyn
Knock Rd.
Belfast

Dear Mr Annesley

I wrote to you on 16 June about an Orange parade through contentious areas of North Belfast. I received a reply from Mr McAtamney on 22 June. I am writing again to you because I do not feel happy to engage in correspondence with old 'maximum firepower, speed and aggression' himself.

I was glad to discover on 22 June that the parade was on 22 June. Since the people who took the decision are not all stupid the contents of his letter can only be regarded as arrogant, contemptuous and full of the insolence of office.

First the route: I measure the outward leg at 2.2 miles, of which exactly one mile is through the majority Catholic area. Of course if you double it up you arrive at 5 miles most of which distance is irrelevant. But it is the absurdity of the argument that is exasperating and insulting. The logic, for want of a more appropriate word, is that it would be acceptable, for example to force a march from the Shankill to Ballysillan through Ardoyne because Flax St. and Etna Dr. would only be 400 metres of the total march! It's not the distance through the Catholic area that is relevant but the fact that it is forced through at all. The insult, humiliation and injustice felt by the Catholic community because of this seems to remain eternally beyond your grasp.

Second the duration: the parade did not take 20-25 minutes to pass. It arrived at the Antrim Rd at 8.05pm and the camp followers straggled past at 8.40pm. The Antrim Rd. at the New Lodge was sealed at 7.35pm and reopened at 8.45pm. It took longer to pass along Duncairn Gardens because several bands were allowed to pause at Halliday's Rd. for specially thunderous drumming, to stamp and jeer and for their supporters to chant obscenities. This display of power had the desired effect. Some of the Catholics in the 230 numbers knelt and prayed, some of them stood with buckets of sand or water, one

man with three teenage daughters trapped in the house wept with rage and impotence. They would all hate me for telling this.

The 'objective [was] to minimise the disruption to the life of the community'. I have to tell you there are two communities. If you are not sure where they live I would be glad to take you on a tour of the interferences separating them, the last of which was erected less than one month ago to facilitate the policing of this parade. It is because one community seeks to impose its domination on the other that these parades take place in such a way as to give maximum offence. In contrast to the provocative behaviour at Halliday's Rd. my watchers on the Crumlin Rd., where the parade was in a Protestant area, tell me the bands played tunes such as Over the Rainbow, and were pleasant to listen to.

11 In these circumstances I find it hard to believe my eyes when I read the phrase, 'in the absence of a more tolerant attitude'. Tolerance by whom? By the Orangemen or their victims? How can I convince you that you are deciding to perform the equivalent of leading the National Front through Golders Green or Southall? I don't say leading the Ku Klux Klan through Harlem. Equally you wouldn't try to put a march through Ardoyne. Why are Ardoyne and Harlem different from Golders Green and Duncairn Gardens? Because the people in these latter places are relatively weak. They can be insulted and ridden over. Ardoyne and Harlem could look after themselves. A society is measured by how it treats minorities. Talking about one community means you don't recognise the existence of two: that helps explain the decision.

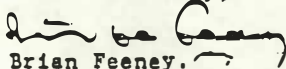
It also helps explain the responses of the police at the roadblocks on the Antrim Rd. I received a number of complaints from people who had tried to ask for directions and got no help. One woman in particular who was trying to reach a 12 year old in St Malachy's College and, being a Catholic of course did not know what was happening, worked her way round the periphery of the seal asking police how to reach St Malachy's College. Funny enough no policeman knew where St Malachy's is. She was furious. I told her to write to you because you were responsible, but I gave her my personal assurance nothing would be done.

23 Your decision also demonstrates the ineffectualness of legitimate politicians (I prefer that description to constitutional) to the people of Catholic working class areas. You took your decision in full knowledge of the damage to community relations in north Belfast where over 540 people have died violently and in contempt of the majority in the lower Antrim Rd. and all proper representations. The police in 'D' (with whom I have good relations) tell me this parade sets back all their efforts at building relations.

It is clear to me and my colleagues that in practice you have no concern for developing community relations and certainly no interest in improving relations with the Catholic community.

They may be the majority in the Antrim Rd, but the Orangemen own it and you are their guarantor. When the police in Hillman St. turn their backs on the screens and interface fences and point their rifles at the few residents who venture onto their own street, Supt. Foster's local liaison committee becomes as irrelevant as me at a meeting with a senior policeman.

Yours sincerely,


Brian Feeney.