



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PA Parades

Mr. McMahon

Orange activities in Co. Down

Following discussion with contacts the following picture emerges which may be of interest in the context of the forthcoming further meeting in the Secretariat regarding the Twelfth:

Portadown: the situation has become more manageable in the past few years due to improved police work by the RUC. Some potential still exists however for trouble - the Orange celebrations remain intrinsically provocative.

In terms of raising issues through the Secretariat, Mrs. Brid Rogers referred to the band which marched through the Garvaghy road on the morning of the Twelfth. The pre-Twelfth Sunday parade had passed through Garvaghy since before the area became built-up. In a sense, it was therefore difficult to object too strenuously to the routing which could not be ascribed to simple sectarianism. However, the band march on the Twelfth itself was a different matter. It was first allowed by the RUC in 1987 as a "concession" to Loyalists for the prohibition on marches through the traditionally nationalist Obins St. and Tunnel areas of the town. However, at the time of the "concession", DUP councillor Sammy Wilson supposedly remarked: "Good! There are far more Taigues in Garvaghy than in Obins St."

Thus, in principle, the RUC decision should be reversed. The band should be forced to take the new road into the centre of Portadown which is the direct (and non-contentious) route to the railway station. It is accepted that the policing of the band march attempts to minimise the disruption and offence to the residents of Garvaghy. Nevertheless, Mrs. Rogers is strongly of the view that the RUC should be pressed to change the band march route before it becomes effectively set in stone. It is clear she sees progress on this issue as possibly achievable with a significant political pay-off for the SDLP approach to the parade issue in the town.

(Perhaps the argument could again be made that both marches through Garvaghy should be stopped as intrinsically offensive, potentially explosive and as exacerbating long term community tensions including between the nationalist community and the RUC. The so called "normality" of recent years arose primarily from massive deployment of RUC force. For many local residents of Garvaghy, there was a sense that their peaceful protests brought no results - there was always a danger that they would turn to more sinister elements in the community. The evidence of lessening Loyalist enthusiasm for the parades should be capitalised on to change the Twelfth band parade march route - which was dictated by a spirit of pure sectarianism. This was a limited objective, based on a recent - flawed - decision which had not yet hardened into

untouchable precedent. We had appreciated that the "resonance" of the Tercentenary made action difficult for the RUC last year - we had not therefore pushed so hard on this issue. However, we felt that it was now time to remove this irritant before it acquired established "symbolic" status.)

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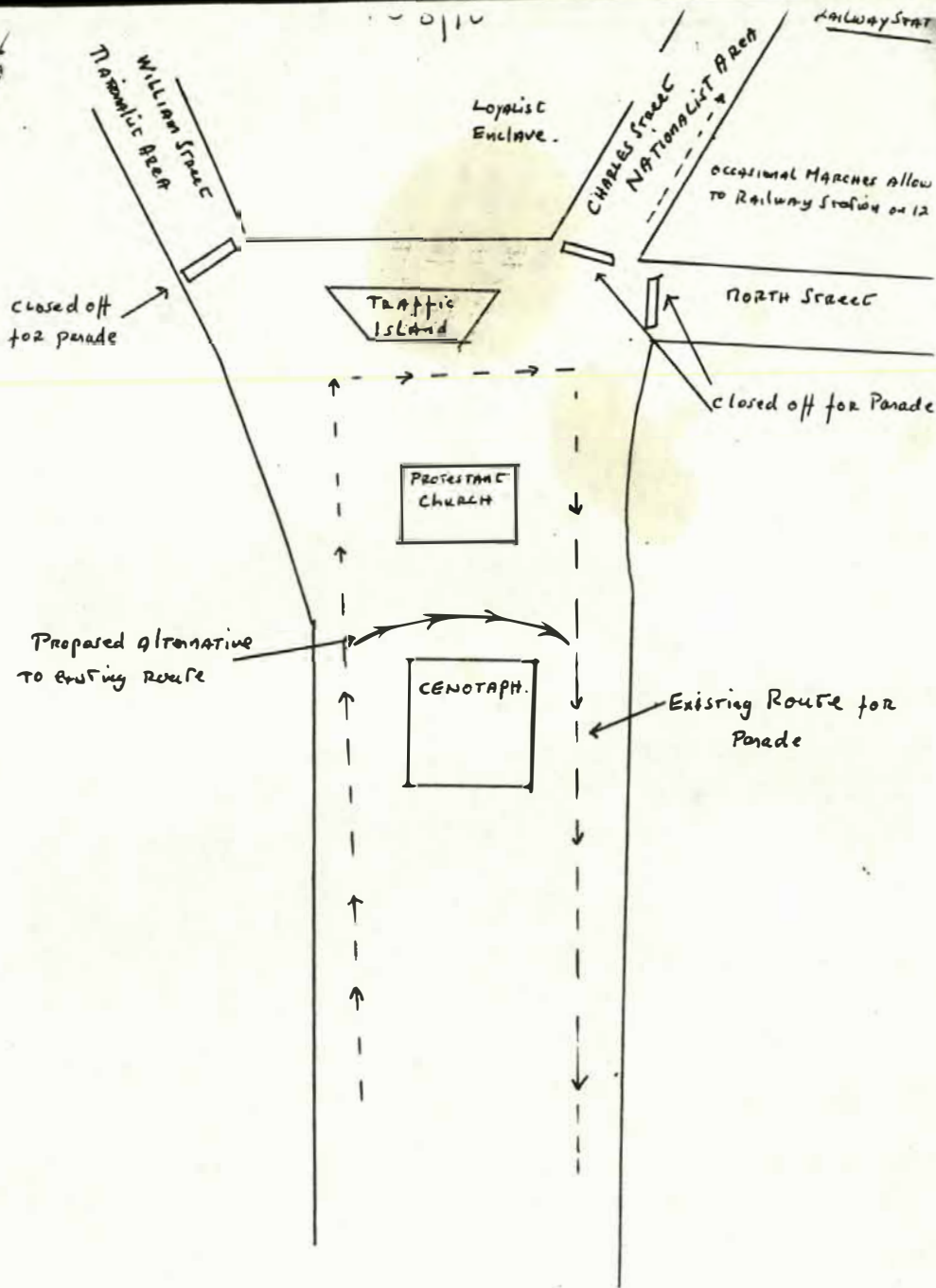
The main irritant here is the series of Orange functions taking place on Friday evenings from early May, when the young Orangemen "strut their stuff" throughout the summer. These events lead to some of the main access roads leading to nationalist area of the town being sealed-off with huge disruption of traffic. We had proposed a very simple change of the parade route last year. (Suggested by Mrs. Rogers - map attached. The change would involve a slight shortening of the usual route followed removing the need for blocking off-traffic at the end of the main street. Of course, the suggested change would also stop the Orangement symbolically "breaching" the nationalist "territory" of the town - from the Orange viewpoint, presumably the substantive point of the whole exercise.) At the least, the British side should be asked to explain the problems they have with the proposal.

Kilkeel/Annalong

I spoke with SDLP councillor Emmet Haughian who has complained in the past about Twelfth celebrations. He said there had been an improvement. The number of permits for Orange events had been reduced by about one third. In addition, a Catholic parade in March through Kilkeel had been allowed and had been protected by the RUC. The band practice irritant - would-be Lambeg drummers pounding away their sense of supremacy into the early hours of the morning from practice sites in close proximity to nationalist areas - had eased. All in all, Mr. Haughian was somewhat optimistic, particularly regarding developments in Annalong which he hoped could lead to lasting improvement in inter community relations in the town. He made the point however that the parade situation could always develop negatively given certain circumstances.

CS.

C. Barrington
26 June, 1991.



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