



An Chartlann Náisiúnta **National Archives**

Reference Code:	2021/45/335
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ConfidentialMeeting with Mr. Peter Quinn
Enniskillen, 20 September 1989

Mr. Quinn is a prominent member of the Ulster Council of the GAA. An accountant, he runs a busy financial consultancy practice in Enniskillen and is also involved in the operation of the cement plant in Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan, owned by his brother Sean Quinn. Politically, he is close to Frank McManus, the former Independent-Nationalist M. P. for Fermanagh South Tyrone.

Collusion/UDR

He felt that the general reaction of the nationalist community to the collusion revelations was one of "I told you so". He saw the publicity about the affair as particularly damaging to the RUC at a time when they seemed to be inching their way towards greater acceptability by the nationalist community. He noted the alacrity with which the Association of RUC Superintendents had pledged its co-operation with the Stevens inquiry. He contrasted this with the resistance at senior level encountered by John Stalker. Mr. Quinn felt that this suggested that unlike the shoot-to-kill controversy, the collusion conspiracy was confined to "junior people" or at least did not involve in a systematic way the senior ranks of the RUC.

He also commented on the poor opinion which he felt the RUC had of the UDR. He was convinced from comments made to him by senior police from time to time that this was the real reason why so little progress had been made on accompaniment. His own view was that while the UDR would never be acceptable to the nationalist community, an accompanied UDR patrol was regarded by most nationalists as very much the lesser of two evils.

He believed that one of the particularly worrying aspects of the collusion affair was the fact that RUC intelligence seemed so frequently to be faulty. He told me of the arrest recently of a young truck driver at Sean Quinn's plant. He said that anybody who knew the local community would have known that the young man in question was not "involved" in any way. He was released within 24 hours. It was clear from the line of questioning that the RUC had arrested him purely to trawl

for information. On the other hand, they frequently failed to have any knowledge of those who were involved. He cited the case of McDonnell, the Ballygawley IRA man shot by a local farmer while attempting to escape after an attack on a UDR patrol in Clogher, Co. Tyrone, some months ago. McDonnell was in custody in hospital for almost 24 hours before the RUC established his identity - and that only following contact from his solicitor. If these cases represented the level of intelligence in the possession of the RUC, it had clear implications for the accuracy of the "wanted" lists which were finding their way into loyalist hands, Mr. Quinn felt.

GAA

I enquired of the state of play on the approach which the Ulster Council have had from the Northern Ireland authorities on the payment of VAT on gate receipts (traditionally the GAA have not paid VAT in Northern Ireland but now they have been told by the authorities that 1983 gaming legislation obliges them to do so). Mr. Quinn said that there had been no progress on the issue since his last meeting with the Department (Mr. O'Donovan's report of 15 May refers). They had not yet formally responded to the Treasury approach but would have to do so shortly. He remained of the view that realistically they would have to begin paying VAT but he was concerned to ensure that some accommodation be reached on the question of arrears back to 1983. He said that if this became an issue he would have to seek our assistance through the Secretariat.

Referring to the vandalism of Lisnaskea GAA club by an RUC patrol earlier this year, Mr. Quinn said that he subsequently attended a meeting with local RUC Commander, Supt. McFarlane, who he said was "furious" about the incident. McFarlane told him that the men involved had been transferred immediately from Lisnaskea.

I asked Mr. Quinn where matters stood on the invitation to the Antrim Co. Board from the Lord Mayor of Belfast to a reception at City Hall, following Antrim's appearance in the All-Ireland hurling final. He said that the Board were awaiting a written invitation, in which event they were likely to go. However, no written invitation had yet been received. His own view was that this position was unlikely to change and that the issue would quietly die.

IRA

His impression was that the Provisionals were having difficulties with the supply of trained personnel and funds. They had lost some key people in recent years and the gap they had left did not appear to have been filled. It remained to be seen how serious an impact this would have longer term. He was also convinced that stories about tensions between the IRA and Sinn Fein about the "wastage" of resources on the political effort were true.

RUC

He believed that, particularly at senior level, the RUC are serious about trying to improve relations with the nationalist community. He was less convinced about the junior ranks and overall the force remained prone to the occasional "act of stupidity" and heavy-handedness which undid much good work. He believed that (certainly prior to the current collusion controversy) the nationalist community was on the whole more and more disposed towards giving the RUC a fair chance and would regard them as far superior to the UDR or British Army.

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