



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code: 2021/50/113

Creator(s): Department of Foreign Affairs

Accession Conditions: Open

Copyright: National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

Confidential

Mr McKee
pa Parade 56
(Ormeau 12 July)

Conversation with Peter Bell

COPY TO:	4E
PST	15
PSS	7
MR P TEAHON	
MR S DONLON	
ALTON	

I had a conversation with Peter Bell, my British opposite number, on Friday.

I voiced in the strongest terms our displeasure at the successive failures of the British side of the Secretariat either to consult us on, or to give us advance notice of, the decisions made in relation to Drumcree and the Lower Ormeau Road.

In the latter respect particularly, I had impressed on Bell on Thursday afternoon the importance of making amends for the failure on Drumcree by ensuring, at a minimum, that the Irish Government received full advance notice of the routing decision taken in relation to the Ormeau Road parade. In a series of conversations with other NIO officials in the course of Thursday evening and early on Friday morning, we had repeatedly emphasised this point. At 7 am on Friday morning, we were promised a call closer to 9 am which would give us the decision. This call never came. Indeed, when we contacted the NIO duty officer at 9.30 am, the latter claimed to know nothing and could not help us.

I told Bell that we regarded these two failures as an abdication of duty on his part and that of his colleagues in the Secretariat. It would appear that the Secretary of State had instructed that the Irish side should not be informed in either instance. This amounted to a clear breach by the British Government of both the spirit and the letter of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. Apart altogether from the substance of the decisions, on which we had very strong views, the British Government's failure to consult with its partner on a matter expressly highlighted for joint attention under the Agreement was extremely disturbing. It would be raised by the Tánaiste at the urgent meeting of the IGC which we had proposed.

In response, Bell denied any calculated attempt on the part of the British side to keep us in the dark. He presented a picture of NIO officials scrambling around on our behalf in an unsuccessful effort to elicit information from the RUC. He had indeed promised to do everything possible to get the decision for us but this had not ultimately been possible. He could not explain why the promised phonecall had not materialised. He claimed that the Secretary of State had first learned of the decision from an ACC over breakfast on Friday (at around 9.15 am) and that, in this sense, the Irish Government were treated no worse than the British Government.

I responded that this presentation was utterly implausible and simply added insult to injury. The failure to respond in any way to a well-signalled Irish request for consultation and information on this parade was at variance with British obligations under the Agreement and demonstrated bad faith and duplicity on the part of the British Government.

David Donoghue

David Donoghue

15 July 1996