

REV. R. T. WILLIAM McCREA, M.P., D.C.

MID ULSTER



10 HIGHFIELD ROAD,
MAGHERAFELT,
CO. LONDONDERRY,
BT45 5JD.

Your/Our Ref.

WM/R/4C

Date

17.8.92

ACK'D A/B

REFERRED TO

A
Mr. J. Cote

RECEIVED
PRIVATE OFFICE
D.E.N.I.

19 AUG 1992

Mr Jeremy Hanley MP
Minister for Education
Rathgael House
Balloo Road
BANGOR


Dear Mr Hanley

Sincere Regards. Please find enclosed circular I have received from a number of my constituents, the contents I feel should be brought to your attention. I have also written off to the President of the Student's Union with the strongest protest to their correspondence.

I trust that you will thoroughly investigate this matter and I await your reply.

I remain

Yours very sincerely


Rev. Dr. R. T. William McCrea MP., D.C.



**Aontas na Mac Léinn
Ollscoil na Banríona**



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The Students' Union

The Queen's University of Belfast

Belfast BT7 1PE Northern Ireland

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18th June 1992

Dear Graduate,

May I begin by offering my congratulations on having reached the end of your course of study at University - I am sure that this stage must often have seemed a long way off as you worked through your undergraduate years.

I write in connection with the graduation ceremonies which took place at Queen's from Wednesday 1st to Saturday 4th of July, one of which you attended. I hope that you and your family enjoyed graduation and will have happy memories of that occasion which marks the end of your days as a student.

It is unfortunate however that not all of those who attend have the same pleasant experience, that due to the playing of the British National Anthem, University graduations are often marred.

Once the academic procession has taken its place on the stage of the Whitla Hall, the organist begins 'God Save The Queen', an action which leads to varying degrees of insult, annoyance and embarrassment for many of the assembled students, parents and academics.

Some sit down, either believing this music to be foreign to them and a sign of one culture showing dominance over another, or through disenchantment with the idea of the monarchy itself.

Others stand proudly erect to salute their anthem, their culture and an expression of their identity. Should they stand with another group of people, those who want to sit down but are too embarrassed to do so lest they offend their neighbours.

Whether standing and feeling insulted that those in front of or next to you have no respect for your anthem, or sitting with feelings of anger and intimidation, or somewhere between the two wishing for the opportunity to escape - the common experience is that a lot of the joy is taken from the

special day of graduation and that the politics and division of wider society are allowed to gain a foothold in the academic celebrations at Queens.

These issues are by no means unique and in many ways serve as just another example of how events, symbols, and even the words we use have different meanings and conjure up different images depending on the particular cultural tradition to which one belongs.

Pride and joy sit uneasily with intimidation and insult in that strange juxtaposition which we have all at some stage experienced but are not always aware of when it is another who endures the negative aspects.

I believe it to be imperative that this fact is recognised, that we understand how a shared event can lead to such diverse and conflicting reactions; and it was precisely this sort of recognition which led the students at Queen's a number of years ago to ban the playing of all national anthems in the Students' Union building. We have yet to progress to a stage where the anthems of both the Unionist/British and Nationalist/Irish traditions can exist side-by-side without conflict, but we have begun to travel down the road of cultural diversity with the firm intention of reaching journey's end.

I believe it is time for Queen's University Belfast to join with its students and academic staff in looking forward to a future that celebrates the richness of diversity and the strength that comes from the true co-existence of different cultures.

With our student body now reflecting the traditions of many nations is it not time that Queen's, rather than sticking with a custom unheard of in most British Universities, found its own international anthem?

Can we not take a progressive step away from the institutionalised notion that there is only one correct culture and the perception that all others are inferior, and create a University that truly exists for all its students? Can we not remove political conflict from our ceremonies, or at the very least have a University that does not appear to take sides in that conflict?

I do not know what your own experiences were at graduation, and how you reacted to the playing of the British Anthem, but would greatly appreciate any comments or suggestions that you or your family might have.

It is my wish that you would broadly agree with the sentiments of this letter, but that not being the case, your views on this issue are equally welcome.

WILLIAM McCREA, M.P., D.C.

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MID ULSTER

Finally, I hope you have enjoyed your student days and on behalf of the Students' Union may I wish you all the best for the future.

Yours sincerely,

Cathal Smyth

CATHAL SMYTH
President 1991/92

Ms Kate Fearon
President
The Student's Union
The Queen's University of Belfast
Belfast
BT7 1PE

KFC

KATE FEARON
President 1992/93

Dear Ms Fearon

I have received several letters from my constituents regarding the circular sent to them dated 18 June 1992.

As MP for Mid-Ulster I am absolutely disgusted that Senior Officers in the Student's Union, Queen's University Belfast find time to forward circulars which in my constituents opinion are quite close to Republican Propaganda.

I have no doubt whatsoever that those who feel angered at the playing of the National Anthem during University graduations are quite happy to receive every financial assistance available from Her Majesty's Government and do not feel insulted annoyed or embarrassed when receiving not for those 'notes' which radiate with Her Majesty's counterpoise.

On behalf of my constituents, I suggest there are more profitable things that should occupy your mind in the best interests of Ulster.

I remain
Yours sincerely

Rev. Dr. R.T. William McCrea M.P., D.C.

EV. P. WILLIAM McCREA, M.P., D.C.

MID ULSTER



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17-8-92

Ms Kate Fearon
President
The Student's Union
The Queen's University of Belfast
Belfast
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I have no doubt whatsoever that those who feel angered at the playing of the National Anthem during University graduations are quite happy to receive every financial assistance available from Her Majesty's Government and do not feel insulted annoyed or embarassed when reaching out for those 'notes' which radiate with Her Majesty's countenance.

On behalf of my constituents, I suggest there are more profitable things that should occupy your mind in the best interests of Ulster.

I remain
Yours sincerely

Rev. Dr.R.T.William McCrea MP., DC.