

Confidential

Second Secretary O hUiginn

Conversation with Ken Maginnis

I took a call today from Ken Maginnis, who protested in the strongest terms at the disclosure in today's Irish Times of his meeting with Minister Taylor at Castle Buildings yesterday.

Maginnis complained bitterly that he had agreed to our request for an informal chat yesterday afternoon, as he happened to be in the building at the time, but would not have done so had he known that we intended to issue a press statement subsequently on the meeting. Today's publicity has been extremely damaging for him, as Orange and Unionist sources are putting it about that Maginnis (a non-Orangeman) came to Castle Buildings yesterday to conspire with the Irish Government in order to undermine the Orange position at Drumcree. It has, he claimed, undone the benefits of the various informal conversations which he had with delegations at Castle Buildings yesterday.

On behalf of the Government delegation, I assured Maginnis that no press statement had been issued and that we had certainly not intended that the meeting with him would take place on that basis. I apologised for the difficulties caused for him at a highly sensitive time by the disclosure of what we had indeed envisaged as a private and informal chat, occasioned by a chance encounter with him in the building. It was our policy to protect the confidentiality of all our contacts in this talks process and we regretted the accidental divulging of the fact of this meeting. If asked about it, we would indicate that the contact with Maginnis had involved no more than "bumping into him in the corridor", as we might run into many other people during the day, and did not in any sense constitute a bilateral with the UUP.

Maginnis was satisfied with this response but hoped that greater care would be taken in future to protect any contacts which we might have either with himself or with other UUP members.

David Donoghue

David Donoghue
10 July 1996