

Meeting with Ken Maginnis (UUP)

9 July 1996

We met with Ken Maginnis, the sole UUP representative in Castle Buildings, at about 4.45. He had earlier met Michael Ancram on at least two occasions.

Asked about the situation in Drumcree, Maginnis expressed the view that the situation needed to be resolved by tomorrow so as to allow the Orange Order 24 hours to explain the basis of any compromise. He was concerned that as from Thursday, the eve of the Twelfth, the effects of alcohol would take over and the situation could get seriously out of hand.

Maginnis emphasised that he was not an Orangeman, and therefore would not presume to speak on their behalf. Nevertheless he had no problem with traditional parades which represented the traditional Protestant ethos. He remarked that, for many Orangemen, the annual church parade was perhaps the only occasion during the year on which they attended a church service and thereby reminded themselves of their religious and civic duties.

He was strongly critical of the Chief Constable who he claimed had no ability to assess what had happened over the last 30 years. He accused the Chief Constable of making a whole series of misjudgements and "selfish decisions", although he admitted that his lack of regard for Annesley was at least partly due to the latter's failure to respond in person to his correspondence. Maginnis suggested that the Secretary of State might send the Chief Constable on an extensive pre-retirement leave, remarking that he had not yet had his 123 days leave (presumably a reference to the number of nights that the Chief Constable is alleged to have spent outside Northern Ireland last year).

Maginnis also expressed some disillusionment with Ronnie Flanagan, who he claimed was a personal friend. He suggested that Flanagan's judgement had been impaired by the influence of the Chief Constable and wondered if he was the right man to oversee the implementation of any compromise. By comparison, he spoke highly of Blair Wallace, who he believed possessed the presence and authority to implement tough decisions and had the advantage of being camera-shy.

As regards his general attitude to parades, Maginnis referred to what he claimed had been his own position, 30 years ago, when he had championed the rights of nationalists to march in the square in Dungannon. He regretted that the younger generation of nationalists, "the McKennas, Rices and McGillans", had lost sight of the fact that the right to march had been at the root of the demand for nationalist's rights. He recalled that he had also pursued a balanced approach on this issue last year, when he "stuck his neck out" in support of the right of Sinn Féin to march in Lurgan. He lamented that he had been rewarded by having his head chopped off last September.

Maginnis argued that the long term solution to the parades issue lay in agreed ground rules which would apply throughout Northern Ireland. The basis of these rules would be that all sides had the right to march on condition that, in the case of church parades, such as the parade at the centre of the Drumcree controversy, band parades and party parades, the marches were restricted to local people. However, when pressed on the issue of the Twelfth

parades, which are held in different venues each year, he accepted that such an arrangement could not apply to the Twelfth.

Asked about the proposal for an independent commission on parades, Maginnis expressed scepticism, stressing that marchers would be no more willing to accept the ruling of a commission than they were that of the Chief Constable, if the ground rules were not right.

Maginnis recalled the practice of Jack Hermon, who maintained a register of bands. The RUC would inform the Orange Order of bands whose behaviour was deemed to be unacceptable and the Order would not book these bands. Maginnis suggested, somewhat optimistically, that, in this way, the "Kick the Pope" bands had been virtually eradicated and warned that if we were not careful they would come back.

Asked about how a way might be found out of the current impasse at Drumcree, Maginnis suggested that something along the lines of last year, when local lodges were allowed to walk down the Garvaghy Road with their banners, would appear to be the most likely way out, although he was not sure that the Orangemen would accept this. He personally felt that it was a pity that the marchers could not also play their hymns.

However, Maginnis was concerned about the position of the RUC who had held the line in implementing the decision of the Chief Constable and who, in the event of a backdown, would be presented as assisting the majority in their "jack-booted" march over the rights of the minority. He referred, somewhat acidically, to the way that this might be presented by Deputies Bree and Costello.

When the point was put to him that the main problem in relation to last year was the triumphalistic aftermath to the march down the Garvaghy Road and the Unionist presentation of the compromise as a victory, Maginnis suggested that at least one of those involved may have since had reason to reflect. He observed, somewhat bitterly, that "youth, or alleged youth, is foolish". More seriously, he suggested that if last year's compromise without the triumphalism was on offer he would talk to certain people. He suggested that the best time to implement any such arrangement would be about 8am tomorrow morning. We referred him to the various efforts at mediation which were taking place on the ground and emphasised the need for the Orange Order to establish contact with the local residents.

Asked about the murder of Michael McGoldrick, Maginnis said that all the indications were that it was the work of the UVF grouping led by Billy Wright, alias "King Rat", although he understood that Wright himself had an alibi. He recalled that there had been rows within the UVF concerning Wright's involvement in drugs and that, while the leadership had sought to bring him into line, "no one had been hard enough to challenge him directly". He understood that there was no evidence to link Mr McGoldrick to any paramilitary organisation.

DC

David Cooney
9 July 1996