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From: PS/Secretary of State  
24 July 1996

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FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

cc: PS/Secretary of State (L) - B  
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B  
PS/PUS (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir David Fell - B  
Mr Legge - B  
Mr Thomas (B&L) - B  
Mr Steele - B  
Mr Leach (B&L) - B  
Mr Bell - B  
Mr Watkins - B  
Mr Ray - B  
Mr Maccabe - B  
Mr Perry - B  
Mr Lindsay - B  
Mr Wood (B&L) - B  
Mrs Collins - B  
Mr Canavan  
Mr Holmes, No 10 Downing Street

Ms Jackie McGimpsey - B

John 25/7.

+ Klu.

#### MEETING WITH THE APPRENTICE BOYS

16/26/7

1. The Secretary of State was very grateful for the briefing provided with your minute of 22 July 1996, in preparation for his meeting with the representatives of the Apprentice Boys in Stormont Castle on 23 July.
1. Prior to speaking to the Apprentice Boys, the Secretary of State had a brief telephone conversation with John Hume.

the Secretary of State said that he was proposing to meet the Apprentice Boys shortly and that his primary purpose was to listen to what they had to say. He said that he would not be able to give any sort of undertakings about how the march would be handled because to do so would be to run the risk of judicial review. The Secretary of State said that the Bogside residents also apparently wanted to see him and he was minded to agree to that, though there could be problems if representatives included acknowledged members of Sinn Fein. More generally, he was

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worried about plans that Sinn Fein might have to block the Apprentice Boys' march on 10 August. The atmosphere was tense and would be likely to be made worse by a republican march which was due to take place on 25 July.

John Hume said that he knew nothing about the proposed republican march but that he agreed that tensions were high. He advised the Secretary of State to speak to Mark Durkan. He felt that, ideally, a moratorium should be declared on all marches until a political agreement was reached. Once an agreed system of government was in place, these marches would become a series of mardi gras(!). The Secretary of State noted this suggestion politely, while making the point that of course this could cause problems for those who favoured the marches.

The telephone conversation finished with a brief account, by the Secretary of State, of where we had got to on compiling terms of reference for the review of parades. Hume raised no difficulties.

The Apprentice Boys

The representatives of the Apprentice Boys arrived slightly early and as predicted, comprised Richard Dallas, Mayor of Londonderry, William Haye, a DUP councillor, Alistair Simpson, Governor of the Apprentice Boys and Billy Moore, General Secretary of the Apprentice Boys. The Secretary of State was accompanied by John Steele, Peter Smyth, you and me.

The Secretary of State opened the meeting by thanking those attending. He said he had been very keen to meet the Apprentice Boys and his aim was to hear their views about the prospects for the Apprentice Boys' march on 10 August. He said that he had been told that the Bogside Residents also wanted to meet him and he was minded, in principle, to agree to this.

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Mr Simpson said that because of the potential problems of this year's march, he had arranged to meet as many people as possible to explain what the Apprentice Boys wished to achieve. He was concerned that the press had tended to magnify only the controversial aspects. He was keen to meet the Bogside residents, but the response had been that this could only happen through the offices of the Bogside Residents Group, an organisation headed by a man with republican links, and who was a former convicted terrorist. The Apprentice Boys were accordingly not prepared to meet them. He also noted that the Residents Group probably did not have the full support of the residents and that, in fact, the parade was not going through the Bogside.

Nevertheless, Mr Simpson said that he lived in the Fountain estate and he recognised the need to alleviate fears in the Bogside and he had, to that end, been in contact with John Hume and with Mark Durkan. There was a proposal that a meeting should be held between the Apprentice Boys and the Bogside residents under the chairmanship of John Hume. In these circumstances, he would attend no matter who else was there. The Secretary of State asked if that would also apply if Mark Durkan were to chair the meeting, given that Hume was not well at the moment and may not be able to take this on. Mr Simpson said that it would. Mr Simpson went on to give a brief summary of how the march would proceed. The local parent clubs would walk the walls and then go on to a church service, following which they would meet up with the visiting clubs who would cross the river to meet on the West Bank. Potentially sensitive areas were the walls themselves and the possibility of Sinn Fein attempting to block access to the Cityside altogether.

Mr Moore said that the Apprentice Boys had already made a very large number of concessions over the previous years. Prior to 1970, the whole procession had formed up on the walls and had paraded around the full circuit. This no longer happened. Only the eight parent clubs, who had the right to parade on the walls, did so. The Apprentice Boys had offered to re-arrange the musicians so that only four bands, rather than eight, accompanied the clubs on their walk

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around the walls. They were prepared to cease playing when passing through the contentious area overlooking the Bogside. Only the Apprentice Boys and the bandsmen would be allowed to walk on the walls. No hangers on would be permitted. His concern, and that of the Governor, was that they might be dealing with people who did not want agreement.

Mr Simpson made the point that since the walls had been re-opened, anyone, regardless of religion or nationality, could walk on the walls on any day. Protestants should not be in a position where they had to forfeit their right to do so on one particular day. The Apprentice Boys had already given up parading on the walls each December for Lundy's burning. They were also prepared to be flexible about the timing. The walk around the walls would only take 20 minutes in total and the contentious area would be passed in only about four minutes. It was not feasible to leave out the contentious area as it started only six feet away from the Headquarters of the Apprentice Boys. Parading around the walls in Derry was the whole basis of the Apprentice Boys' ethos.

Mr Simpson went on to say that he, personally, was in a particularly difficult position as he was Chairman of the Fountain Community Association. He wanted to avoid the events of August leading to major unrest and damage in the Fountain estate. He had been trying to encourage the regeneration of the Fountain estate and he did not want to wreck that.

Richard Dallas said that it would be important to resolve this issue as soon as possible and avoid an eleventh hour decision. An early decision would help maintain discipline and give a clear message to the police and the Army. Mr Haye said that his concern was that nationalist tension was deliberately being stoked up in advance of 10 August.

Mr Simpson said that if the Apprentice Boys were not allowed to enter the West Bank it would put the residents of the Fountain estate into a very difficult position. In such circumstances, they would regard themselves as without friends on the Cityside and might

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well decide to move out. The consequence would be a totally divided city. He was very concerned that messages had been sent to nationalists outside Derry, including in Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan, to converge on 10 August. He recognised that there were major concerns on the part of businesses in Derry and he would be talking to the Chamber of Commerce later that day. In response to a question from Mr Steele, he made it plain that the Apprentice Boys could not concede on their right to walk around the whole of the city walls. This was a point reinforced on a number of occasions by the General Secretary and Mr Haye.

The Secretary of State said that there were close parallels with the situation at Drumcree. It was no coincidence that the residents associations on the Garvaghy Road, on the Ormeau Road and the Bogside were all headed up by people with strong republican sympathies and under the control of Sinn Fein and the IRA. Mr Moore said that so far there had been no sign of any compromise from the nationalist side. He repeated this point several times. Mr Dallas said that the issue was currently not being discussed in the Council, though Mark Durkan was trying hard to calm things down. He thought that if this Thursday's nationalist parade - which was starting in the Waterside and skirted the Fountain estate - went peacefully, it might undermine attempts to cause trouble on 10 August.

The Secretary of State turned to the security aspects of the march and made the point that the Fountain estate was right up under the walls and therefore vulnerable to attack from above. This would certainly be taken into account by the police. Mr Simpson said that the RUC had been in contact with him but were currently listening to what they had to say before reaching a decision. The Bogside Residents Group were very reluctant to talk to the police.

Mr Haye expressed concerns about the Secretary of State meeting the Bogside Residents Group which would give Sinn Fein a platform. The Secretary of State said that he recognised the difficulties and the constraints on Ministers meeting Sinn Fein representatives following the abandonment of the IRA ceasefire. More generally, he said that he faced a very serious public order situation. The operational decision would be one taken by the Chief Constable. However, he



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regarded it as important that the Apprentice Boys presented themselves in a positive way and be seen to demonstrate reasonable flexibility and not, therefore, be classed into the same mould as the Orange Order at Drumcree. He strongly favoured the idea of the two sides meeting under the auspices of either John Hume or Mark Durkan. It would otherwise look bad if the Bogside Residents Group were able to claim that they had never met the Apprentice Boys. Mr Haye had said that the Residents Group had indicated that the Apprentice Boys would be surprised about what the former were prepared to concede. It was therefore sensible to put that to the test.

Mr Haye said that the Apprentice Boys were still open to suggestions. He agreed with Mr Simpson that we wanted to maintain and if possible enlarge the Fountain estate and did not want to jeopardise the economic prospects for Londonderry.

Mr Moore raised the possibility of agreeing to other changes during the march around the walls including the installation of security screens and parading two by two in order to minimise visibility. The Secretary of State said that this was very helpful. He hoped to see Mark Durkan later that day. He was clear that Durkan wanted to see a compromise. This part of the discussion finished with a fairly hardline intervention from Mr Moore who majored on what he saw as hatred for Protestants among some residents of Derry.

Finally, Mr Simpson raised a specific point about a fence near Bishop Street which had been installed to help protect the Fountain residents. This had been taken away by the DOE while repair work was being undertaken. It was important to have it replaced. Mr Steele undertook to look into this.

Comment

The meeting went very well, with the Apprentice Boys, particularly Mr Simpson, showing some refreshing signs of flexibility. They did not press the Secretary of State on what he might or might not

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decide to do about banning or allowing the march. Mr Simpson seemed particularly concerned about the prospects for trouble given the dual role he has Governor of the Apprentice Boys and Chairman of the Fountain Community Association.

Mark Durkan

The Secretary of State took advantage of a meeting with the SDLP to have a brief word with Mark Durkan about his session with the Apprentice Boys. He gave a brief account and stressed the importance of the proposed meeting under Durkan's chairmanship. Mark Durkan said that he would take this on board and would hope to have the meeting within the next few days. He thought there might be a role for the churches. He wanted to do all he could to end the notion of blocking the bridge which he thought would reduce some of the tension.

The Secretary of State said that he thought that the Apprentice Boys would be prepared to show some flexibility, though they were adamant that they had to walk the walls. This, however, was not to say that they would not accept a police restriction if that were imposed. Durkan agreed with this and did not seem horrified at the prospect of a compromise which included at least some walking on the city walls.

(SIGNED)

MARTIN HOWARD