

INTERVIEW WITH ALASDAIR SIMPSON, GOVERNOR APPRENTICE BOYS
RADIO ULSTER - THURSDAY 8 AUGUST 1996

Seamus McKee: Mr Simpson, good morning

Alasdair Simpson: Good morning.

Seamus McKee: Do you accept now that that stretch of the walls has had to be closed to you, and will be closed to you on Saturday?

Alasdair Simpson: Well, if you were standing here you would see it and there's no way anybody could manually take that barricade down.

Seamus McKee: So what decision now faces the Apprentice Boys?

Alasdair Simpson: Well, the decision will be made on Saturday morning, whatever's getting done it will be done at a General Committee meeting held on Saturday morning here before the parade starts.

Seamus McKee: And what considerations do you believe have to inform the decision that you take?

Alasdair Simpson: Well, that's up to the governing body of the General Committee, whatever they say, I have to accept it.

Seamus McKee: What would your guidance to them be?

Alasdair Simpson: That will be for me to tell them on Saturday morning.

Seamus McKee: So will you just tell us what the procedure is from now that will lead up to this decision?

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Alasdair Simpson: Sorry, I don't understand what you mean by the procedure.

Seamus McKee: What I mean is, the process that now takes place. What is the decision-making process that will happen now?

Alasdair Simpson: The decision-making process will be on Saturday morning when all the members of the governing body of the General Committee will meet in the Apprentice Boys' memorial hall, and the decision will be made then of what is going to happen.

Seamus McKee: Do you not feel it would be helpful if, at this stage, the Apprentice Boys said publicly how they intended to react to the decision that has been taken?

Alasdair Simpson: I have already reacted to say that we're very deeply disappointed at the Secretary of State doing what he did.

Seamus McKee: So is there likely to be some sort of protest then on Saturday?

Alasdair Simpson: Well, I'm sure the Apprentice Boys are going to let their voice be heard some way.

Seamus McKee: And do the Apprentice Boys and their leaders take responsibility for all that's implied by any kind of protest that might have resulted, the Apprentice Boys might not intend ...

Alasdair Simpson: I think that is very unfair to implicate that in your question because I myself have done everything I possibly can within the last 3-4 weeks to come to an agreement with the residents

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of the Bogside. I have talked to a lot of the residents and it seems to be a minority, run by the Bogside Residents Group, that are determined, and no matter what happens we do not get our civil rights on Saturday morning.

Seamus McKee: Well, of course, what I intended in my question was that, as has been said by both the Secretary of State and indeed the RUC, that everyone must take responsibility for actions which may follow that may not be intended by a particular parade. However, could I just ask you this, do you feel that progress was made in those talks that you had with the residents, because after all, that's what's presumably going to have to resume, whatever happens on Saturday.

Alasdair Simpson: You must understand, Seamus, that there's more people in the Bogside Residents Group. I have been talking to a vast amount of people cross-section over the past 4 weeks from the Bogside, from the business groups, from the churches, there's more people in the Bogside Residents Group and the reply that we got from them all is, as long as the day went over peacefully, they didn't mind.

Seamus McKee: Right, so you are saying that your contacts, and as you say there was a range of them, that your contacts have suggested to you that there is then progress that can be built on after this weekend?

Alasdair Simpson: I will talk to any reasonable person after this weekend if they wish to talk to me. But it has to be a reasonable person, somebody that doesn't come with demands and make the decision that

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unless you do as I do, you'll not get doing civil anything.

Seamus McKee: How do you view tomorrow night's planned march in the city?

Alasdair Simpson: Thank you very much.

Alasdair Simpson: I think it's, to the Protestant people of this city, it is just going out for confrontation and to make sure that we don't have a peaceful day on Saturday.

Seamus McKee: Well, the RUC have said ...

Alasdair Simpson: I think that people here who are having the parade on Friday night must take the responsibility if anything goes wrong on Saturday, they're the ones to blame, not the Apprentice Boys.

Seamus McKee: Well, the RUC have said that they see no reason at the moment why that parade should be anything other than peaceful.

Alasdair Simpson: No harm to the RUC, but I'm living here in the city centre, I live on the West Bank here. I know the feeling of the majority of the people of this city. I think I can talk better than what the RUC can.

Seamus McKee: What's your own sense, finally, Mr Simpson, of the next few days?

Alasdair Simpson: I hope that the common sense does prevail and, as far as I'm concerned as leader of the Apprentice Boys, we will still go out and have our march round the city centre. We will stand for civil

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