

## NORTHERN IRELAND Information Service

6 JULY 1997

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Commanding on the decision made earlier today in respect of the Drumcree church parade by the Chief Constant under Article 4 of the Public Order Order 1987, the Rt Hon Dr Mo Mowlam, Secretary of State for Not them Ireland, said:

"This sad day for all of us. Many will be angered by what has occurred but I appeal to them and to all with the nice in their communities to exercise restraint. Northern Ireland has seen far too many tragedies. Peacant the preservation of life in the end matters most of all.

The the peaceful assembly - the right to march - is a basic right. But all rights carry responsibilities. They wild be exercised with respect for the rights and freedoms of others.

In this case a decision, which is for the Chief Constable to make, has had to be taken to preserve public safety. Thully support the action the Chief Constable has had to take but at the same time this is an outcome that I regret and that neither he nor I wanted.

What ye and the vast majority of people in Northern Ireland wanted was a sensible accommodation. I have that my utmost to achieve that as has the Chief Constable. But where there is intransigence on both sides has becomes impossible. And that is what I have met.

Let use the quite clear. My approach involves setting up new and better arrangements for dealing with these disputes for future years. I very much regret that the previous Government did not take the opportunity it had it rule in place improved arrangements for this summer.

We fill ring forward new legislation on parades later this year. Most people accept that the current way of deliver with these disputes is not adequate. The independent report from Dr North and his colleagues will know de the basis for our new approach.

Con liques have been set for the parade this year. If these are not fulfilled to the letter that is clearly sometime the Parades Commission will want to take into account in the future.

The indement of the Chief Constable was that the public safety of all people in Northern Ireland is better protect by this decision. I respect and support his judgement. The law must be upheld but I want to make that the way ahead for the future is a new arrangement designed to ensure that the pain of these events on be put behind us for good.

I know sany in the Nationalist community will be angered by this decision. It has been dictated by circuits ances. I would have preferred it otherwise. Nevertheless I appeal to all in the Nationalist

come that to understand that overall public safety across Northern Ireland has to be the Chief Constable's main theren. Your voice is not ignored. I understand your feelings and I will address them in legislating on this late. I am only sorry that option was not open to me this summer."

The last of the statement issued by the Secretary of State is attached.

6 July 1997

CHIER CONSTABLE'S DECISION ON DRUMCREE CHURCH PARADE

STATE OF BY THE RT HON DR MO MOWLAM, SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IREL

From position I watched the events last year at Drumcree with horror and may.

Since was appointed as Secretary of State for Northern Ireland 65 days ago wave therefore made it clear that the problems associated with marches were my number one priority.

This devernment is committed to the fundamental principles of fairness and furtice. There will be no second-class citizens in Northern Ireland. I am determined to see full respect for, and equality of, civil, polarical, social and cultural rights and freedom from discrimination for everyone. We will give real expression to this by bringing into our law all rights and freedoms protected by the European Convention of Human Right

Northern Ireland has seen over the centuries the clash of different identities. I am committed to building a society where the different identities are treated equally and enjoy mutual respect.

We introach the difficult and contentious issue of parades against this back round of fundamental principles. Contentious parades see a clash of right. The right to march - or peaceful assembly - and the right to live it your home without fear or intimidation.

We committed to the right of peaceful assembly. It is one of the provided provided provided to the European Convention which will soon be incorporated in law in Britain and Northern Ireland. But it is not an absolute right. As ECHR spells out, it can be subject to lawful restrictions on the great of public order or to protect the rights and freedoms of others.

Moc. cople agree that the best approach where rights are in conflict is to be to balance them in an accommodation. It's the common-sense approach. It is the approach taken in the North Report, which my Government is going to implement. And it is the approach which I and the Chirt constable have followed in trying to resolve the dispute over the routing of the Drumcree Church Parade.

No interpretable should under-estimate the difficulties for those involved in resulting an accommodation on this issue. For some the very notion of accommodation or compromise equals defeat. To address these deeply felt converts about disputed parades, I have had an intensive range of conjuntations with residents, marchers and other interested parties

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across Jorthern Ireland - some twenty meetings in the last six weeks alon Many of those meetings have been with members of the Portadown Oran Jodge and the Garvaghy Road Residents Association.

I am the ry to say that my efforts, along with those of many others, have not the fruit. Those whom I have met are sincere in their beliefs and loyal their communities. I believe it is this very sincerity and loyal that held them back from reaching an accommodation of the kind I and the sought.

I have so doubt that such an accommodation is the desired outcome of the vast provided of people in Northern Ireland and throughout these islands.

The if Constable of the RUC has specific responsibilities in respect of mores, as set out in the 1987 Public Order Order. Under Article Four the Order he is entitled to specify conditions under which a parace is to take place. His decision must be guided by the likely outches of a parade, with or without conditions, in terms of serious publ. Disorder and other consequences. Through a scrupulous process of weight these factors and applying the law, he has decided that the Drum to parade should proceed subject to the conditions he has set out. If the conditions are not fulfilled to the letter that is clearly some that the Parades Commission will want to take into account in the future.

This ision is not an accommodation. Where there is intransigence on both ites, that cannot be achieved. But the Chief Constable's decision, which is not make, has full authority. It is the rule of law. I full apport the action the Chief Constable has had to take but at the same wife this is an outcome that I regret and that neither he nor I want.

I exist everyone in Northern Ireland to respect the rule of law.

Civil and societies are nothing without it. They are nothing either unled basic principles of fairness and justice are upheld. These are at the last of this Government's approach and will remain there.

Let be quite clear. I never wanted a position where there was a need for imposed decision. Like the vast majority of people here, I wanted to sold local accommodation. I have done my absolute utmost to achieve that accommodation, through the Proximity Talks, through the series of meet I and John Steele have held, and through many other initiatives. My a pach for the future will continue in the same way.

My a pach also involves setting up new and better arrangements for deal with these disputes for future years. I very much regret that the folious Government did not take the opportunity it had to put in place proved arrangements for this summer.

We will bring forward new legislation on parades later this year. Most peoring ccept that the current way of dealing with these disputes is not adecute. The independent report from Dr North and his colleagues will provide the basis for our new approach.

In the ang our proposals we will take into account the fears and sens vities which these issues arouse on all sides. Our proposals will be side act to the fullest possible scrutiny by Parliament. We shall be ensured that, when legislation is introduced later this year, it will benefit fully from the experience of this marching season, and the views of all those involved, to achieve any enhancements which are possible to increase the chances of local accommodation and the workability of new arrangements. That is the way ahead for the future.

I revail convinced that, had these mechanisms been in place this year, they ald have made an important contribution. I am grateful to Alin are Graham and his team for their work this year, although I would straig they did not have a remit to engage in the decision making process. And they have had no direct influence on the decision which has guite properly, been taken by the Chief Constable.

Las summer Northern Ireland witnessed a degree of public disorder which left a mark of shame on society here. It damaged beyond measure the image of this community in the eyes of the world. All the people of Northern Ireland have suffered as a consequence.

To it one who may be thinking of revisiting that tragedy on their friend, their neighbours, their workmates, and their community let me say 5.

This efore you act. Think about the families whose lives you might thriften, whose hopes you will dash, whose chances of a decent job, a decent home, a decent future you will diminish. No one is challenging the inity and worth of the nationalist identity. Your voice is heard, and will continue to listen - always. You have my word on that.