

E.R.



17 JUL 1985
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Mr Barry
[Signature]

NOTE FOR THE RECORD: SECRETARY OF STATE'S MEETING WITH
CHAIRMAN OF COOKSTOWN DISTRICT COUNCIL ON 9 JULY

During his visit to Cookstown on 9 July, the Secretary of State paid a courtesy call on Mr Alan Kane, Chairman of the District Council. Mr Kane was accompanied by his Vice-Chairman, Mr Espie Donaldson and by the Clerk, Mr William Bownes. After a tour of the Council offices and an exchange of pleasantries the Secretary of State invited Mr Kane to tell him of any particular worries that he had.

2. Mr Kane said that car parking in Cookstown on Thursdays, Fridays and Saturdays was chaotic and that the DOE provision of parking facilities was woefully inadequate. As a result trade was being lost to the town. Given the shortage of land, a multi-storey car park was the obvious solution but the Council would be happy to consider any other possibilities which the DOE might put forward. The issue was raised each year at the Council's consultative meeting with DOE, but it always seemed to disappear from view.

3. On the question of a ring road, Mr Kane noted that a start had been made on the eastern distributor but this road now disappeared into nowhere. It was important that there should be some move towards completing the work in the not too distant future.

4. Mr Kane made some general comments about the need for more industrial development in Cookstown, noting that many young people were leaving school with no hope of work. In particular, there was a lack of work for young men; too much of the industry that had come into the town was geared towards employing girls. One of the problems was that the town was not well served by roads and this tended to put off potential investors.

5. Mr Kane argued strongly against the proposal to close the textile section of Cookstown's community workshop. He understood that the reason for the closure was lack of sufficient funds to pay the supervisor in question. He had written to Dr Boyson on the subject.

6. Turning to the problem of Sinn Fein councillors, of which Cookstown had four, Mr Kane said that it was galling for Unionist councillors to have to sit next to men who stood up and declared their support for the IRA. PSF should have been banned before or after the elections and the Government should clarify its position on this topic and publicly state its support for councils who found themselves in difficulty. Mr Kane said that in dealing with Sinn Fein councillors, it was his view that although members of councils should act within the law the Secretary of State should not be surprised if everything possible was done to exclude the supporters of violence from council business. In reply, the Secretary of State rehearsed the arguments against the proscription of Sinn Fein. He said that it was up to individual councils to decide how to deal with the problem within the law, provided that essential public services were maintained.

7. On parades and marches, Mr Kane said that the authorities were responsible for an abhorrent infringement on traditional freedoms, in many cases against the advice of the local police. The result of this in Cookstown had been the dramatic deterioration in relations between the two communities and, of considerable concern, a serious deterioration in relationships between the loyalist community and the RUC. Maintenance of the current policy on banning and rerouting marches would lead to anarchy. Mr Kane wished formally to protest against police brutality on the evening when the Cookstown march was rerouted. The Secretary of State said that rerouting was a matter for the RUC and that decisions were taken on operational grounds.

There was no general policy on banning or rerouting marches. Each decision was taken in the light of local circumstances but the Secretary of State said that he would note what Mr Kane had said.

8. The tone of the meeting was measured and reasoned throughout. Mr Kane put his points forcefully but in a controlled manner. At the end of the meeting he presented the Secretary of State with a council plaque, a presentation which was photographed by the local press.

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9. The Secretary of State agreed to look into the industrial and environmental points raised by Mr Kane. I should be grateful if Mr Gunning would submit draft paragraphs for the Secretary of State to send Mr Kane on car parking in Cookstown and on the ring road issue. I will look to Mr McAuley to provide something on industrial development in Cookstown and on the particular question of the closure of one section of the community workshop.



J A DANIELL
Private Secretary

10 July 1985

cc PS/S of S (L&B)
PS/Dr Boyson (L&B)
PS/Mr Patten (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr A W Stephens
Mr Brennan
Mr Merifield
Mr Buxton
Mr Reeve
Mr Lyon

Mr Fell
Mr Barry
Mr Gunning (DOE Private)
Mr McAuley (DED Office)
Mr Bickham