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Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition

Drumcree Community Centre
3 Ashgrove Road
Portadown BT62 1EU,
Co. Armagh.
8th May 1996

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Mr. Dick Spring TD,
Labour Party Leader,
Dail Éireann,
Kildare St,
Dublin 2.

Dear Mr. Spring,

Enclosed is a letter from our group to the DPP expressing our concern at the summons five local people, including myself, have received. We are unhappy on three counts: David Trimble's influence on the DPP may have hindered the usual process of law; the equivalent leaders on the other side (the Orange and Unionist leadership), who could be charged with more serious offences, have not been charged; and finally that those who eliminated a traditional riot in our area are to be rewarded by the State with these summons.

We ask you to bring this matter to the attention of the relevant authorities.

Is mise le meas

Breandán Mac Cionnaith

Breandán Mac Cionnaith
Chairman

Garvagh Road Residents

Drumcree Community Centre
3 Ashgrove Road
Portadown BT62 1EU,
Co. Armagh.
2nd May 1996

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Director of Public Prosecutions
Newtownards,
Co. Down.

Dear Sir,

On the morning of April 26th, five local people received summons to appear in court on May 29th this year, in relation to a complaint of Superintendent J R Blair, with reference to offences allegedly committed on the Garvagh Road on July 9th last.

Earlier that morning an article appeared in the *Portadown Times* quoting Mr. David Trimble as having written to you and having received a reply from you. It seems he wrote requesting that some people from our community be prosecuted on foot of our actions last July. Mr Trimble is quoted as saying to you, "It is generally considered to be unfair for the authorities to bring one-sided prosecutions when it would be better if equal concern was expressed about the situation which gave rise to the matter in the first place".

Are these local people being charged in accordance with normal legal procedure or on the instructions of a politician who is interfering in the due process of law? Are the peaceful protesters on our side being equated to the violent rioters on the other side?

In contrast to the peaceful actions of the Nationalists, those who instigated the mass rallies at Drumcree, who called upon Orangemen to support them by blocking their own streets and towns (a call-up which the RUC asked the BBC and UTV not to broadcast on Sunday 9th 1996), those who made speeches clearly designed to incite sectarian hatred and violence, those who are ultimately responsible for the violence, are they not to be prosecuted in keeping with Mr. Trimble's demand for even handed justice? On what grounds are leading figures in the Orange Order and prominent Unionists politicians exempt from prosecution?

This community has had an unhappy tradition of seeing our youth riot on the nights prior to Orange parades through the area. Last year, after weeks of persuasion by community leaders, and two night vigils on the streets, we eliminated this violent tradition. Are we to be rewarded by the State with a conviction "for hindering the lawful activity, namely the free passage of traffic". The video evidence suggests that we were indeed very reluctant to do anything that might have been unlawful. Surely you are aware that our efforts to resolve the marching issue by exclusively peaceful means have been consistently rejected by the leadership of the Portadown district of the Orange Order.

If you are to proceed with these charges against local people we insist that you apply the law impartially and have those who committed more serious offences face the courts.

Is mise le meas

Brendán Mac Cionnaith

Breandán Mac Cionnaith
Chairman