



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

**Reference Code:** 2021/100/13

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GERRY ADAMS MP  
SINN FÉIN  
PRESIDENT

7/7/98

A chara, *Bertie*.

Please find enclosed a public statement from me on the current situation. I had considered publicly calling on David Trimble to host a special meeting, on an all-inclusive basis, of all interested parties including the host communities and the marching orders, as a means of bringing about the direct dialogue which is necessary to find a voluntary accommodation.

On reflection I decided against doing this publicly in the hope that perhaps Mr Trimble could be persuaded privately by you to take this initiative.

I have not written to him on this matter in case this puts him off.

Is mise le meas

Gerry Adams MP

*I have sent this to Tony Blair.  
I don't know if its a success  
but I note that this morning  
Newsletter is also calling on  
Trimble to take an initiative.  
I'll leave it with you to  
push. Maybe go back?  
GA.*



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**For immediate release: 7/7/98**

At this point in the controversy over Orange parades I want to outline my view of the current crisis. Let me begin by reiterating Sinn Féin's position on the issues underpinning the current difficulties.

1. Sinn Féin upholds the right of the Loyal Orders to march. There are over three thousand marches by the various loyal orders each year. There are only a small number, less than 1 per cent, which nationalists find intolerable.
2. In these cases Sinn Féin supports the residents in the host communities. No march should enter any areas where they are not wanted. This is not an issue of conflicting rights. It is an issue of equality.
3. Sinn Féin believes that all democrats should stand by the residents. We believe that all solidarity protests should be peaceful and disciplined
4. Sinn Féin is for a voluntary accommodation of all contentious parades. This can only be achieved by inclusive and direct dialogue.

The issue of inclusive and direct dialogue, based on equality, is at the crux of this matter. The Orangemen refuse to talk. They refuse to accept the rights of nationalists to be consulted or for them to choose their own representatives. In other words they refuse to come to terms with the reality that if there is to be truly a new era then no group has the right to dominate another. I accept that this is a difficult concept for unionism and orangeism to embrace at this time.

This statelet was established as an orange state. And the orange order was the cement which held unionism, of all classes and social groupings, together. The orange order is an anti-catholic organisation which has

members well placed in all of the institutions of the state, through the Churches, sections of the business community, the RUC, the Judiciary, and the Civil Service. It has a vested interest in maintaining the status quo. *It has chosen the narrow issue of the Battlefields on which it intends to rally all those elements who are against equality.* The growing confidence of the nationalist section of our people, efforts to implement an equality agenda, and the need to build a new society on this island is seen by orangeism as a threat to its position. It is presented by its leaders as a threat to the protestant way of life. It is not. But it is only through dialogue that the two sides, that is those of us who want change and those who feel threatened by change, will get to understand each others positions.

So, the main objective of all who wish to see these matters resolved must be to bring about dialogue.

The responsibility upon the British government must be to uphold the rights of all citizens to be free from sectarian harassment.

If it genuinely means to do this then the British government risks alienating substantive elements of unionism, if only on a temporary basis. So London, and the establishment on this island, have only come to this proposition reluctantly as the example of other years on Garvaghy Road testify.

The temptation now is for the pressure to go on the residents because it will be suggested, as it has been already, that they need to make concessions to orangeism rather than risk David Trimble's position within unionism. This suggestion underestimates the strength of Mr Trimble's position and it ignores his responsibility as recently elected First Minister designate.

Mr Trimble's new position compels him to take a non-partisan position on these matters and a pro-active role in seeking their resolution. He cannot refuse to talk. Only last week the representatives of all of the political parties in this state, including many orange leaders, were present in the inaugural meeting of the shadow Assembly. Unionists, including orange members sit in local government with representatives of all of the other parties, and do business with them. The same thing must happen now if a voluntary accommodation is to be found to the current crisis.

The Garvaghy Road Residents Coalition have already put forward a

five point initiative to resolve the stand-off at Garvaghy Road. Unfortunately this was rejected by the Unionists and the orange order. I would appeal to them to reconsider this initiative or to propose an alternative. In any case I would ask them to enter into dialogue because without dialogue an accommodation is impossible. With dialogue a solution is always a possibility.

In conclusion, I want to reiterate my call for all democrats to support the residents in the beleaguered nationalist areas, particularly on Garvaghy Road. No community should have to endure the demonisation which the residents of Garvaghy Road or the lower Ormeau are subjected to, or the annual siege which these victim communities have to suffer.

There can be no backing down now in the face of pressure and threats from the massed ranks of orangeism. The current difficult phase must be managed calmly and with an eye to the future. We must come down on the right side of history. And the right side of history is the side of change. We cannot expect those who fear change to come on board until they know that they cannot stop it. Only when this is clear will they seek to play a role in shaping it. I have always made it clear that the best way to bring about change is by managing it in a shared way. That is the challenge facing us all today.