

## CONFIDENTIAL

- if counsel didn't, they wouldn't but would send the opinion to the ICPC who might
- disciplinary charges brought against the RUC's judgment were generally not well enough founded to succeed
- he expected to have counsel's opinion within a week or ten days.

4. Ronnie said that he thought that the Secretary of State could not and/or should not set up a public inquiry until a disciplinary charge had been ruled out or any disciplinary case had been completed. I did not comment but I am doubtful about this view. It will need to be tested with lawyers.

5. On witness protection in relation to the two witnesses who had withdrawn their statements, Ronnie said that the Coroner (with whom he is displeased on other grounds) had not asked the RUC for help in relation to witness protection. He went on to say that, if witness protection could have made any difference in these particular cases, it would have been provided and accepted in the context of possible criminal prosecutions. The circumstances meant that it was never a realistic proposition.

6. As to the allegation that a police officer had advised a leading suspect to burn the clothing that he had worn that night to avoid forensic examination, Ronnie said that

- the police officer was Reserve Constable Atkinson
- the leading suspect in question had been charged with murder but the charge had been dropped
- the claim was made in a statement by the then girlfriend of the leading suspect (subsequently withdrawn)
- the police believed that the claim had prima facie credibility

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