



HER MAJESTY'S CORONER

DISTRICT OF GREATER BELFAST

John L Leckey LL.M.
H.M. Coroner
Coroner's Office
Courthouse
37 Church Road
Newtownabbey
Co. Antrim BT36 7LA
Northern Ireland

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] Esq BL
Bar Library
Royal Courts of Justice
Chichester Street
BELFAST
BT1 3JF

23rd August 1999

Dear [REDACTED],

ROBERT HAMILL, DECEASED

You will recall that I sent you a copy of all the statements I received in this matter. Our intention was to meet early next month to discuss how the inquest should proceed and to decide on which witnesses should be called.

Detective Inspector Michael Irwin of Portadown RUC has called with me and left me copies of statements made by Tracey Clarke (Witness A) and Timothy Jamison (Witness B). I am sure you will agree that each statement contains serious allegations and in the normal course of events one would expect that the DPP would direct a prosecution. However, it has become clear that neither of these witnesses because of fears for their own safety was willing to give evidence at a criminal trial. Because of that the anticipated criminal proceedings could not materialise.

You will note that in the statement of Witness A reference is made to a police officer called Robbie Atkinson. On the 3rd page of that statement an allegation is made that Robbie Atkinson telephoned Alister Hanvey on the morning following the incident and advised him to get rid of the clothing he was wearing the previous night. Detective Inspector Irwin has advised me that a telephone check was carried out to see if this allegation could be substantiated. It has been established that a telephone call was made from the home of that police officer to the home of Alister Hanvey. When this was put to the police officer concerned he denied making the telephone call but stated on the night in question two visitors were staying overnight. One of these was the uncle of Witness A. The uncle states that when he heard that a serious fight had taken place in the town centre he was concerned for his

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niece (Witness A) and then made the telephone call. All this seems most implausible.

The problem I am now faced with in arranging the inquest is to decide how to deal with these two witnesses. If neither was willing to give evidence at a criminal trial I would assume that both would be unwilling to get involved in the inquest. If that proves to be the case I could either ignore the statements each has made (I am advised that each of these witnesses subsequently retracted their evidence) or read out the contents of each statement in open court. You will see that each statement contains a number of names. I have asked Detective Inspector Irwin to approach each of these persons with a view to ascertaining if they would be willing to make a statement and give evidence at the inquest. If they are not willing to do this then I feel I could assume that none is a compellable witness and that each would then receive notification only of the date, time and place of the inquest.

When you have had an opportunity of considering the difficult issues arising I should be grateful if you would contact me with a view to us having a consultation.

As soon as I know the identity of counsel who will be appearing on behalf of the RUC I will let you know. I understand that the Crown Solicitor's Office has been instructed on their behalf.

I look forward to hearing from you.

J L LECKEY
HM CORONER FOR GREATER BELFAST