



SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

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28 November 1997

Dear Ronnie,

**MEETING WITH ROBERT HAMILL'S FAMILY - MONDAY 24
NOVEMBER 1997**

I met with Diane Hamill, together with three of her sisters, [REDACTED] from the Committee on the Administration of Justice, and Father [REDACTED] at Diane Hamill's request to receive a 20,000 signature petition calling for an independent inquiry into the death of their brother in May this year. The petition also called for the suspension of four police officers who allegedly failed to intervene to stop the murder.

Briefly, the background is that Diane Hamill wrote to me in August requesting a meeting. I agreed, as they were raising issues about the system for investigation but explained that I could not comment on the investigations into the death or the complaint themselves. Having arranged to see me on 24 November, Diane Hamill sent me a letter on Friday 21 November listing a number of points. This became the focus of the meeting, but the delegation also raised a few additional points. I explained to them that I could not comment on their detailed questions because they either fell to you or to the Attorney General. I also sought, on more than one occasion, to get the family to encourage their relatives and friends to co-operate with the processes that exist for investigating the murder and the complaint against



the police officers. It is clear that the family are not helping themselves, although this may well be as a result of the advice they are receiving.

The issue of an independent inquiry was not discussed. I should record that I have no plans to consult colleagues on having one (as happened in the Stephen Lawrence case), especially in circumstances where the family are not co-operating with the investigative process. In any case the processes which are underway would have to be exhausted before I would seriously consider the possibility.

Notwithstanding this, they are clearly upset, not just by the death of their brother, but also by the alleged police inaction (why didn't they intervene/why were no arrests made on the evening or the next morning after the attack/why were no charges brought until after the death etc), and by what they see as a cover-up by the authorities (the police did not want the case to go to court because of the bad publicity it would give/the Hamills fully expected the sixth person charged to be released and believed a recent conversation with Mr Kitson in the DPP's office was simply preparing them for this). I am concerned to make the system stand up to their criticism. I want to defend it where this is possible and, if necessary, to explain why things have happened the way they have and where we have now got to. For example, they may not have received information because it was under investigation.

I should be grateful, therefore, if you would supply me with as much detail as possible on the points in the attached letter and annex so that I can reply to Diane Hamill. I have sought to mark those which I think are for you, and I have also written to the Attorney General. If the matters are sub-judice then I will say so, but I want to answer as many of the points as I can and to be as open as circumstances permit - I think they deserve to be told all we can. I would like to



try and set the record straight with them and not to miss this opportunity to inform them of the considerable amount of work that has gone into investigating the murder and the complaint.

I know that you and the Attorney General will have reservations about what I want to do, and I appreciate this. I want, however, to give these people an honest response to what they see as reasonable questions on which they have had no response to date.

I said I would try to respond to them within 2 weeks (or 3 weeks at the latest) and it would be very helpful, therefore, to have your report in a couple of weeks so that I can do this. If this presents a problem, or if you would find it helpful to discuss this letter, please let me know.

I am copying this letter to [REDACTED] Chairman of the Independent Commission for Police Complaints.

