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SECRETARY OF STATE
24 NOV 1997
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FROM: [REDACTED]
POLICE DIVISION
24 November 1997

cc PS/ Mr [REDACTED]
Mr Steele
Mr [REDACTED]
Mr [REDACTED]
Mr [REDACTED]
Mr [REDACTED]

PS/ Secretary of State (B)

DIANE HAMILL'S LETTER OF 21 NOVEMBER

Diane Hamill sent in late on Friday a letter setting out questions the family wanted the Secretary of State to address at today's meeting.

Suggested responses are contained in the attached note. The Secretary of State may want to discuss these at the pre-brief today.

Signed

[REDACTED]

RESPONSES TO QUESTIONS IN DIANE HAMILL'S LETTER OF 21 NOVEMBER

General

Obviously only received late on Friday. Raises a number of important points which I am happy to run through with you. Before doing so, important to state my position. Sympathetic, understand your concerns, want to ensure these are known by others.

1. **(Release of press statements)** This is a matter for the police. Have you asked the Chief Constable to comment on this? All I can say in general terms is that there can often be a media clamour for information from the police immediately after an incident and they have to balance the issuing of an initial statement with the need to be clear on the facts, as well as with the problems of prejudicing the investigations.

2. **(Suspension/allowing a crowd to assemble)**

- This is, of course, a matter for the Chief Constable to decide. Have you raised your concerns with him? The question of sick leave is not something that I have knowledge of, it is, again, something you should ask the Chief Constable about.

On the question of allowing the assembly of people, this of course goes to the heart of the investigation. It will, of course, be important for all those who can assist the police to do so. It is more difficult to get to the truth of any incident where the police/ICPC are faced with witnesses who will not co-operate fully.

3. **(Why were charges not brought until Robert's death?)** This is an interesting point, which I do not have an answer to. It is again a matter for the Chief Constable (who may bring holding charges) and for the Director of Public Prosecutions. (I will pass your question on to them if that would be helpful.)

4. **(Lack of forensic evidence)** This is another matter which falls within the operational responsibility of the police. As such it is a question for the Chief Constable. Have you raised the question with him? If not, I could pass on your comments to him and to the ICPC.

5. **(Links between officers and defendants)** I am not aware of these press reports. Notwithstanding this, unless someone can come forward with specific allegations such claims are very difficult to investigate. I will, however, with your agreement, pass these comments on to [REDACTED] who would, I am sure, look at them as part of his supervision of the police investigation.

6. **(Deliberately failing to arrest a man shouting abuse at Diane Hamill's house)** The allegation that the police, effectively, failed to make an arrest of a man shouting abuse at your house is a very serious matter. Have you made a complaint about this? If so - good, this is the best way to have the matter looked into. If not - if you can give the police or ICPC details then this allegation can be investigated. Alternatively, if you would like to give me details, but I need specifics, times, dates etc, then I would be happy to pass these on to ensure an investigation.

(Officers standing in front of the Hamill's in court) I am not, obviously, aware of the background to this. However, officers do on occasion provide a physical barrier between defendants and the public gallery. I suspect in this case it would have been because of the abuse your family received, as I recall, at a previous hearing.

7. **(What steps have you taken since our last meeting?)** The first thing to say is that I do not have responsibility for investigating cases. I did, of course, ask officials to confirm that the case was being investigated, and I was reassured to know that Kevin Murnaghan, one of the most experienced members of the ICPC and a man of great integrity and ability, had been appointed to your case.

It would not be appropriate for me to become involved in the detail of the case; this is for the DPP and Chief Constable.

One point that is clear, however, is that the investigation has been troubled by a lack of co-operation and I would encourage you, again, to do what you can in this regard so that the truth can more easily be established.