

STATEMENT OF WITNESS

STATEMENT OF ROBERT ATKINSON

AGE OF WITNESS [If over 21 enter 'over 21'] : OVER 21

I declare that this statement consisting of 5 pages, each signed by me is true to the best of my knowledge and belief and I make it knowing that, if it is tendered in evidence at a preliminary enquiry or at the trial of any person, I shall be liable to prosecution if I have wilfully stated in it anything which I know to be false or do not believe to be true.

Dated this 27 day of April 1997

DERECK BRADLEY  
SIGNATURE OF MEMBER

by whom statement was recorded or received

ROBERT ATKINSON  
SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

I am a Full-time Reserve Constable of the Royal Ulster Constabulary engaged on uniform duties and presently station at Portadown RUC Station. In the early hours of the morning of 27 April 1997 I was detailed public order duties at Portadown town centre. I was crew in a landrover patrol with Constable Neill, driver, R/Constable Cornett, observer and P40 crew. At approx 0130 hours we were parked in the small lay-by in front of the Alliance and Leicester Building Society at Market St/Woodhouse Street junction. There was a fair crowd of people making their way up the town from the direction of Bridge Street. These persons were in groups of 2, 3 and 4 and consisted of young men and several girls. They were either patrons from Portadown Rugby Club or the Coach Inn, Banbridge. At this stage all was good humoured and relatively quiet. At approx 0140 hours, Constable Neill moved off from the kerb and as he did so a male dressed in a greenish/blue shirt aged about 30/35 years, with dark trousers and short brown hair passed in front of the landrover and mouthed something towards the vehicle. I formed the opinion that he was continuing on into Woodhouse St and that he was heading home from St Patrick's Hall, Thomas Street. As he did so 2 youths approached him from the Halifax

## STATEMENT OF ROBERT ATKINSON

Building Society and one of them squared up to him in the mouth of Woodhouse Street. Words were exchanged but no contact took place. R/Const Cornett opened her door and told the 2 youths to clear off home. At this time we were parked on the give way lines at the top of the street facing down the town. There was a commotion behind the landrover and suddenly Const Neill's door was pulled open and the Constable was pulled out. I jumped out of the back of the vehicle to see what was happening and found the male I have previously described having an altercation with Constable Neill. There was a lot of shouting up towards the town church and it was obvious that a Nationalist crowd had come down Thomas Street and met with a Loyalist crowd who had been making their way home. The 2 crowds cat-called at each other and suddenly, all at once, in about 3 or 4 places scuffles took place, all on the upper side of the junction. I would estimate that the crowd consisted of about 50 Loyalists to 10 - 12 Nationalists. On seeing them clash R/Const Cornett called on the radio for assistance. I followed Constable Neill to Market Square above Eastwood's shop where he extricated a male person who was being attacked by 4 or 5 youths. He removed this person to Woodhouse Street for his own safety. I think this person was dressed in a light coloured casual top. As I turned around to regroup with my colleagues I observed that we were being attacked with bottles etc. I observed 2 bodies lying on the roadway. One in the middle of the road outside Eastwood's shop and one outside the bakery on the corner of Thomas Street. I kept the crowd back with my baton whilst Constable Neill checked these persons. There were also a number of females giving

## STATEMENT OF ROBERT ATKINSON

assistance. I called on R/Const Cornett to get hold of an ambulance and she had already requested one. The Loyalist youths were still trying to attack both us and the Nationalists and Constable Neill pulled one of them from the crowd. Some of the rest tried to intervene and I stopped them. I accompanied Const Neill to the landrover where I was confronted by the male person in the blueish shirt whom we had originally encountered. This person was very agitated and grabbed me by the jacket. I broke free and he tried to wrestle my baton from me. In the ensuing struggle the leather strap was broken. Whilst I was struggling with this person I could see out of the corner of my eye that 3 youths were jumping on the head of the male who was lying on the ground outside Eastwoods. I broke free and went to the injured person's aid where I remained until assistance from other police arrived. All this time the Loyalist crowd taunted and tried to attack. They had to be held back by police and at one stage I struck a male dressed in a mustard coloured shirt, whom I believed to be called Rory Robinson, in the stomach to prevent him breaking through police lines. Whilst doing so I had occasion to observe A [redacted] remove a youth known to me as Wayne Lunt dressed in a white baseball hat and a red, white and blue scarf. I would estimate that it took the ambulance approx 10 - 15 minutes to arrive and that it was at the scene a further 15 mins. The incident lasted approx 1 hour before peace was restored.

SIGNATURE OF WITNESS

ROBERT ATKINSON

CHECKED AND CERTIFIED A TRUE COPY OF THE ORIGINAL SIGNED

*David Bradley*