

Derry Sinn Féin Arrests

On Monday 20th February 1995 at 6.45am the RUC raided the homes of six republicans in the Derry area. The six, Mary Nelis, Dodie McGuinness, Brid Curran, Noel Mc Cartney, Terence Meehan and Gerry Doherty were arrested under Section 14, Schedule 7 of the PTA, but were not informed why. Each was conveyed separately at high speed to Castlereagh. The RUC remained in their homes searching and reading all personal papers for, on average, a further two hours. Each was interrogated about their knowledge of a Ms. Claire Diver, mother of three children (all under the age of 3) who had recently taken up residence in Derry, in the Ballymagroarty Estate. (Ms. Diver's three children have been taken into Social Services care because they were neglected due to her drug abuse)

Since she moved into Ballymagroarty Ms. Diver was involved in a dispute with her neighbours about her selling drugs to their children. This was conveyed to Noel Mc Cartney and Terence Meehan, members of the Tenants Association by members of the Neighbourhood Watch. Ms Diver's subsequent visits to the Cable Street Sinn Féin centre were to enquire from Councillor Mary Nelis if she would make representations to the Housing Executive to have her re-housed. She told Cllr. Nelis that she wished to get her children back from Social Services who had taken them into care and that disputes with angry neighbours about drugs abuse would prevent this.

At 11.30am on the same day that the six people were arrested the RUC launched an attack and raid on the Sinn Féin centre at 15 Cable Street. During this raid the RUC photographed the inside of the building. A Sinn Féin member, Patrick Coyle, who was in the office was assaulted by the RUC, arrested, taken to the Strand Road RUC Barracks and charged with disorderly behaviour and assaulting the RUC officer who had struck him. He was released on £200 bond to appear at Derry Court on Monday 27th February. Approximately thirty RUC personnel, six jeeps and two armoured cars were involved in the operation at the Sinn Féin centre which lasted several hours by the end of which several hundred people had gathered and a full scale riot was only averted by the intervention of Sinn Féin. To date we are aware of ten other people who have since been visited by the RUC and cautioned in relation to these events.

Also on Monday 20th the offices of the Well Woman Centre in Derry were raided by the RUC and many documents, including a list of counselling appointments, were taken. The case of Ms Diver had been referred to the Well Woman Centre by Cllr Mary Nelis.

That same day, the RUC raided the homes of Ms. Diver's brother and sister in Strabane. Her sister was injured in the raid on her home when the RUC smashed down the door as she was attempting to open it.

At approximately 4pm that same day two RUC Detectives, one of whom was Detective Paul Mc Ilwane, entered the Walker home at 23 Marlborough

Street, Derry, they offered to re-settle Patrick Walker in a house of his choice, in a place of his choice, and any amount of money be requested in return for a fabricated statement alleging that the republicans being held in Castlereagh had been part of a republican 'anti-social squad' that had threatened him. They stated that others were being offered the same deal and that although they had three days to sort it out he should decide quickly or be left out. He refused, but later the next day at approximately 4.30pm they went to his girlfriend's house looking for him. He was not there. Later that night the Detectives phoned his home enquiring if he was there. Subsequently he made an Affidavit to his solicitor detailing these events and relayed the same to journalists from the Irish News and the Derry Journal.

On Tuesday 21st February Ms Diver's family issued a Writ of Habeas Corpus, stating that their sister had been receiving psychiatric treatment after an attempted suicide bid and an on-going drugs abuse problem. At a subsequent hearing on Wednesday 22nd February the Writ of Habeas Corpus was refused. The RUC admitted that Ms Diver had been in their custody since Wednesday 15th February 1995.

At approximately 1pm on Tuesday 21st February three of those detained by the RUC on Monday were released, Dodie Mc Guinness, Brid Curran and Gerry Doherty. Dodie and Gerry were informed by the RUC that their files would be sent to the DPP. The remaining three, Mary Nelis, Noel Mc Cartney and Terence Meehan were, later that day, charged with falsely imprisoning Ms Diver. Noel Mc Cartney and Terence Meehan were further charged with intimidation (forcing Ms Diver to answer questions) and all three appeared in Court on Wednesday 22nd February and remanded in custody. A bail application will be heard for all three on Friday 24th February.