



**BRITISH-IRISH  
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY**

**COMHLAUGHT IDIR-PHARLAIMINTEACH  
NA BREATAINE AGUS NA hÉIREANN**

**REPORT**

from

**COMMITTEE D (The Environmental and Social Committee)**

on

**THE CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF PARADES**

## **SCOPE OF THE ENQUIRY**

1. Committee D of the British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body decided to undertake this enquiry into the cultural significance of parades in February 2000. The disputes and problems associated with parades in Northern Ireland have been analysed and commented on in exhaustive detail - controversies surrounding Drumcree and the Garvaghy Road, or the Lower Ormeau Road, overshadow any discussion of the subject. However, the Report of the Parades Commission for 1999-2000 reveals that of 3,403 parades notified to the Commission in that year, 3,106 were "uncontentious" - only 297 required consideration by the Commission. Of these 297, restrictions were imposed on only 152, more than a third of which were linked to the dispute at Drumcree. In other words, the vast majority - over 90 per cent - of parades pass off without dispute. The concentration of the media and public opinion on a handful of notoriously controversial incidents risks distorting our understanding of the true significance of parades in Northern Ireland.

2. In conducting our enquiry we have attempted to distance ourselves from the controversies. In particular, we decided not to look at the problems of Drumcree and the Garvaghy Road. Nor did we think it proper to meet Mr Brian Currin, because of the delicacy of the mediation work in which he is presently engaged. Instead we have focussed on the broader significance of parades: at the traditions and beliefs expressed through marching and at the role of parading organisations in the community. While the enquiry has touched on disputed parades - the annual march by the Apprentice Boys of Derry [ABD] around the walls of Derry and the St Patrick's day parade by the Ancient Order of Hibernians [AOH] in Kilkeel - the emphasis has been not on the practicalities of organisation, but on the motives of the participants. To this end we decided to extend the scope of the enquiry beyond Northern Ireland, and talked to both the Orange Order and the Ancient Order of Hibernians in the less highly-charged atmosphere of Scotland. Within Northern Ireland we met the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, the Bogside Residents Association and businessmen attempting to mediate between the parties in Derry, as well as the Parades Commission and academics. We are indebted to all the witnesses who took the time to discuss these issues with us. They are listed in the Appendix. However, despite many requests we regret we were not able to arrange a meeting with the Orange Order either in Northern Ireland or in the Republic of Ireland.

3. At the outset it should be noted that although the Committee met with the Orange Order, the Apprentice Boys of Derry, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Bogside Residents' Association, the Committee is not directly comparing these groups. We are conscious of the differences in scale between the various groups and also of the differing nature of the social, cultural and political activities in which they are engaged.

## **THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND**

4. The major parading organisations in Northern Ireland trace their historical roots back more than two centuries. The Orange Order was formed in Armagh in 1795 and

held its first parade, commemorating the Battle of the Boyne in 1690, in the following year. The Apprentice Boys of Derry are named in honour of the thirteen apprentices who shut the gates of Derry in 1688 against King James II. The first Apprentice Boys club was established in 1714, though the present organisation dates from some 100 years later. The Ancient Order of Hibernians claims to have roots in the sixteenth century, though the Order itself was founded in the United States in 1838, and it is from this organisation that the AOH in Britain and Ireland derives its lineage. For all these organisations marching is an essential part of the celebration of their traditions.

5. Nevertheless, the nature and significance of marching have not been constant. Throughout the eighteenth century the Government held military parades in Ireland to commemorate the Glorious Revolution of 1688. Other miscellaneous organisations - Freemasons, secret societies, Jacobite supporters, and so on - also paraded in public. The formation of the Orange Order followed a period of factional attacks by both Protestant and Roman Catholic groups, culminating in the "Battle of the Diamond" in September 1795. The Order's purpose was to defend the Protestant religion and the existing Constitution. With the encouragement of the Government it played its part in the attacks on and expulsion of Ulster Catholics in the late 1790s. In 1798 the Order took the Government's side in resisting the rebellion by the United Irishmen. Major parades had a military character, and on one occasion in 1798 an Orange parade was inspected by the commander of the army in Ulster, General Lake.

6. Various Catholic brotherhoods also developed in the eighteenth century, with a view to defending Catholics against both the authorities and, later, against the Orange Order and other Protestant factions. Members of these brotherhoods, including the Whiteboys, Defenders, Ribbonmen and Molly Maguires, are known to have employed secret signs, rites and passwords, as well as processions. The Ancient Order of Hibernians itself was founded in the United States as a fraternal association, from where it came to Ireland, merging with the existing secret brotherhoods<sup>[1]</sup>.

7. Throughout most of the nineteenth century, parades by both Protestant and Catholic groups often resulted in sectarian violence and were discouraged by the Government, notably under the Party Processions (Ireland) Act 1832<sup>[2]</sup>. The Act was finally repealed in 1872, and in the 1870s, as Neil Jarman and Dominic Bryan write, the Orange Order became more extensively patronised by both the landed classes and the Belfast Bourgeoisie and it was used to mobilise opposition to the campaign for Home Rule and to create a distinctive British identity<sup>[3]</sup>. Membership reached some 100,000 in the early twentieth century. In contrast, attempts by Catholic or nationalist organisations to march publicly were resisted. Nationalist parades were only permitted in areas with a large Roman Catholic majority. The AOH nevertheless flourished in this period as a friendly society, providing Catholics with a range of social activities as well as assistance with welfare and funeral services. Although there were few AOH parades, the organisation's membership grew rapidly, peaking at around 170,000 in 1914.

8. After partition the links between parading and the defence of the State hardened further. Jarman and Bryan argue that both Northern Ireland and the Republic developed "a collective identity which was based upon the single dominant ethno-religious group"[\[4\]](#). Orange parades in the North became "effectively ... a ritual of state", in which senior Unionist politicians participated[\[5\]](#), and proliferated accordingly, both in Protestant and Roman Catholic areas. In contrast, the State permitted nationalist parades relatively rarely, and when they took place in areas with a mixed population they often led to disturbances. In the Republic, on the other hand, Orange parades became increasingly difficult to organise, and were on occasion threatened by the IRA (Jarman and Bryan, p. 5). Nevertheless, such parades have survived in Counties Donegal and Cavan, where a strong Orange tradition still remains.

9. The membership of parading organisations has shrunk since the early twentieth century. Jarman and Bryan estimate the current membership of the Orange Order within Northern Ireland at about 40,000. In Scotland the Order admitted to a gradual decline in membership, though still estimating that it has 50,000 members, or slightly fewer, distributed in some 900 lodges. The ABD number about 10,000. The role of the AOH as a friendly society was diminished by the introduction of state social welfare by the Insurance Act 1910 and by reforms after the Second World War. The membership now numbers between 7,000 and 10,000 in Northern Ireland. In Scotland membership has declined even more steeply, to around 1,000. Despite this long-term decline, RUC statistics show that the number of marches in Northern Ireland has increased dramatically in recent years, from around 2,000 a year in the mid-1980s to over 3,000 now[\[6\]](#). This increase is partly accounted for by the inclusion in the figures of hundreds of non-political marches in the totals, but in addition the number of loyalist parades (which according to the Parades Commission outnumber nationalist parades by some ten to one) has risen by about a third in this period. The number of parades shows no sign of falling. In 1998- 99 3,211 parades were notified to the Parades Commission; in 1999- 2000 the figure was 3,403.

## **SUMMARY OF EVIDENCE**

### **TRADITION**

10. Parading organisations who talked to the Committee were unanimous in affirming that they marched in order to celebrate traditions and culture rather than to make political points or to antagonise opposed communities. The Apprentice Boys of Derry stressed that their organisation was based on the history of the city. Parades were commemorative, family events to pay tribute to those who defended the city's gates and walls in 1688. They insisted that they had to celebrate their traditions because "the day the parade is stopped, that day the entire culture of the city is stopped". They claimed that they had no intention to cause offence to the nationalist community. Indeed, parades were timed to minimise inconvenience, and the single band taken on the walls did not play in the more contentious sections.

11. The Scottish Orange Order also emphasised the importance of tradition. However, their view of tradition was less localised than that of the ABD. Rather than recalling events in Scottish history, the major parades are held on the Saturday preceding the anniversary of the Battle of the Boyne. The Grand Master, Ian Wilson, said that the Order continued to celebrate the Glorious Revolution, even though the major events took place outside Scotland.<sup>[7]</sup> He saw the Glorious Revolution as the source of civil liberty, the establishment of the Protestant faith and the Union. Connected events in Scotland, such as the battles of Killiecrankie and Dunkeld in 1689, were marked by banners or by the names of individual lodges, but not by parades. In this respect the Scottish Orangemen share a common tradition and heritage with their Irish brethren. Nevertheless, the Scottish Grand Orange Lodge is proud of its separate identity and independence. Mr Wilson reminded the Committee that it was founded in 1798, less than two years after the original foundation in Armagh. It flourished independently, particularly in south-west Scotland where the Covenanting tradition was strongest<sup>[8]</sup>, long before major immigration from Ulster boosted its membership further. Other Grand Lodges around the world are also independent and diverse; Mr Wilson recalled the Grand Master of the Grand Orange Lodge of Togo making a speech to the Imperial Council in French. The Scottish Orange Order said that they deeply resented being presented in the media as no more than an offshoot of the Irish Order.

12. The number of parades in Scotland is small compared to the number in Ulster. There are four major parades celebrating the Battle of the Boyne, and four annual divine services. In addition the 70 or so District Lodges hold annual church parades. As in Ulster, the parades follow traditional routes where possible - for instance, the annual parade in Glasgow always follows the same route from Blythswood Square to Glasgow Green. However, the Order said that it was concerned to avoid causing offence, and bands were prohibited from playing when passing any place of worship where a service was in progress. The Order assured the Committee that they were happy to re-route parades if there was any objection from local residents. Indeed, country parades move from town to town, so that there is a change of route every year.

13. The AOH claims to be descended from the secret societies devoted to protecting the Catholic religion and clergy. The organisation today retains a strongly traditional religious and cultural element, holding its major parades on St Patrick's Day (17 March) and the Feast of the Assumption (15 August). There is also a deeply ingrained Irish nationalism in the Order - Irish birth or ancestry is a necessary pre-condition of membership. Indeed, members of the AOH in Scotland told the Committee that they still saw themselves as Irish: Scotland was merely where they paid their taxes. On the other hand, members in both Newry and Port Glasgow insisted that the Order was non-party-political and non-sectarian. Indeed, the Northern Irish AOH had proposed a general non-sectarian festival on 12 July. AOH parades, like those of the Orange Order or the Apprentice Boys, follow traditional routes. The problems that this has led to in Killeel are discussed below.

14. Neil Jarman and Dominic Bryan in their evidence to the Committee also confirmed the role of tradition. They traced the origins of the parading tradition in Northern Ireland still further back than the Orders themselves, to the Corpus Christi parades in Dublin (the first record of which dates from 1498). The eighteenth century had seen parades by Freemasons, which had in turn influenced the Orange Order. Both loyalists and nationalists had paraded in the nineteenth century, most notably in Derry, where both traditions used the town walls.

15. But while Jarman and Bryan acknowledged the traditional element of parades, they argued that such "tradition" was in reality hard to define, because tradition was in fact a process of change. The economic and social needs of the persons who made up the marching orders changed, and so did the nature and popularity of the parades themselves. Equally, the Orange Order and the AOH fulfilled different needs in different parts of the world - for instance in North America. In Canada the Orange Order employed more people than in Ireland, but was primarily a credit union. "Tradition" was often invoked in response to threats, but in fact those who attended any one parade had many different motives.

16. The diversity of motivation, they argued, was most apparent at Orange Order parades. Younger loyalists were still attached to parading culture, but increasingly not under the umbrella of the Orange Order, which was not considered to be sufficiently militant. Marching bands were now increasingly important in attracting younger people, and had their own active social scene. The Orange Order set out rules for the choosing of bands but these were generally not followed. Instead, the paramilitaries and the "blood and thunder" bands were growing in strength. However, such bands were often seen at parades organised by the Order, and thus parades revealed both the weakness and the strength of the Orange Order. On the one hand the Order no longer controlled a fragmented Unionist tradition, but on the other hand its parades still permitted a wide range of people from the Unionist tradition to come together, and so gave it a continuing strength and prestige within that tradition.

17. Problems have also been faced by the Orange Order in Scotland. Mr Wilson said that the Grand Orange Lodge strictly controls participation in parades. Bands had to be notified members of official band associations - bands with paramilitary links were not tolerated. Members of the Order had been expelled for such links, and some had joined the recently formed "Independent Orange Order". Mr Wilson described this as a tiny organisation of which he knew little, and which had no links with the official Orange Order.

18. A comparable fragmentation in the nationalist tradition is revealed by the decline in membership of the AOH in Scotland. Members told the Committee that at the start of the Troubles, in 1970, the Scottish AOH had about fifteen bands. Many of these bands then left the Order, to join the Western Band Alliance [WBA], which was purely a band organisation. The WBA had no religious ethos. The Order believed it was strongly political, with links to Sinn Féin. Today it continues to cream off younger

people, leaving the AOH with only five bands. The two organisations are wholly distinct, and never hold joint parades.

19. Despite these elements of fragmentation in both loyalist and nationalist traditions, it is clear that the majority of parades in Northern Ireland are indeed genuinely "traditional" and unproblematic. As indicated above, only 4-5 per cent of parades are disputed; most of the others are accepted as a normal and unquestioned part of social life. Jarman and Bryan noted that rural Orange Order parades, for example in Fermanagh, were very different from parades in Belfast. For the participants they were anodyne, respectable events, an undisputed part of social life. It is clear that the same applies to almost all parades, by both Orange Order and AOH, in Scotland. In such cases the concept of "tradition" is not even questioned.

## **RELIGION**

20. Religion plays a crucial part in the life of both the Orange Order and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. Both are exclusive organisations. Mr Wilson confirmed that to join the Orange Order you have to be a Protestant and uphold the authority of the Bible. To be a member of the AOH you have to be a practising Roman Catholic. Mr O'Connor, President of the Provincial Board of Scotland, told the Committee that the Order investigates potential members in order to confirm their regular attendance at Church. Scrutiny of applicants in some cases goes further, as some divisions of the AOH, for instance, do not admit divorcees. Mr O'Connor admitted that sustaining such strict religious and moral standards is difficult in the contemporary world - the frequency of marriage break-up or of mixed marriages, for example, makes it increasingly difficult for applicants to meet the criteria for entry.

21. Parades and other events organised by the Orders are in many cases also specifically religious. The AOH in Port Glasgow recalled that 70 years ago 40,000 members had attended a celebration in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes. Today the numbers are much lower, but in addition to their own celebration of the Feast of the Assumption members also attend marches organised by the Catholic Church, including the annual "pro-life" march in Glasgow to the Catholic Cathedral. The AOH said that members of the Orange Order also take part in this march, but that they generally did not enter the Cathedral.

22. Dr Anthony Buckley, of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, emphasised the importance of religion, particularly to the Orange Order. He argued that it was too easy to dismiss the religious significance of Orange Order rituals. There had recently been a long church service to bless a new banner. There had been complaints at the length of the sermon, but not at the fact that there had been a service. Marches often involved commemoration of the dead of the First World War and the laying of wreaths. Moreover, the stories and rituals of the Orange Order were often based on biblical stories, in which God's faithful had faced their enemies and been granted ultimate salvation. Although much of this ritual was hidden from the public eye, the Orange Order had good grounds for claiming to be founded on religion.

## **POLITICS**

23. As noted above, Jarman and Bryan drew attention to the mixed motives of marchers at Orange Order parades in Ulster. For some participants the motivation was genuinely religious, while for others parades were a demonstration or assertion of political power. For others again a parade was principally a social occasion. They argued that this diversity reflected the fragmentation of Unionism over the last 30 years. However, the Orange Order had retained a strong political connection<sup>[9]</sup>, in contrast to the Apprentice Boys, who were disconnected from the Ulster Unionist Party in 1974. One result of this was that the ABD generally did not have party political speeches at their parades, and had therefore been able to hold on to more moderate members. The Orange Order, in contrast, had often been deeply divided by the selection of speakers for 12 July parades.

24. On the other hand, the Grand Orange Lodge in Scotland emphasised their view that they were less political than their brethren in Northern Ireland. In their view society in Scotland was less polarised; sectarianism and religious discrimination had largely disappeared. The Order had formerly had strong links to the Scottish Unionist Party, at least until the party changed its name to "Conservative" in 1965<sup>[10]</sup>. However, the Order had never taken centre stage in Scottish politics, and today members belonged to all political parties. Mr Wilson speculated that most of them probably voted for the Labour party, but some SNP councillors were also members. This might appear to contradict the Order's unionist ethic. However, Mr Wilson argued that it was sufficient for members to pledge loyalty to the Crown, and that this was entirely compatible with Scottish nationalism.

25. Brendan Duddy and Garvan O'Doherty, businessmen involved in mediation between the Apprentice Boys and the nationalist community in Derry, also emphasised the political aspect of parades. They accepted that Protestant culture was deeply ingrained in many of the ABD. But while there was a cultural aspect to parades, a more important motivation was power - an attempt to assert rights, political and territorial, by a minority community in Derry. Loyalists in Derry, where a large majority of the population were of a different tradition, saw parades as a chance to challenge the existing power base in the community. At the same time, the weak position of the loyalists also meant that they had to negotiate in order to march at all. Equally, the nationalist population was more tolerant of loyalist marches in Derry than in some other areas, because of its own position of strength. This point was confirmed by the Bogside Residents' Group [BRG], who summed up the feeling of nationalists in Derry towards the ABD as more one of annoyance than intimidation.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

26. The diverse motives for parading outlined above are reflected in the motivation of individual members. The three witnesses from the Scottish Orange Order each described their reasons for joining. Ian Wilson, the Grand Master, originally joined as a junior member because his best friend was a member. His parents were not

members, though his grandmother was. His parents in fact persuaded him to leave the Order while he was studying at university, but he rejoined at the age of 23. Pastor Helen Walker, a Minister in the Evangelical Church and former Grand Mistress, also joined as a "juvenile". All her mother's family had been members before her. In addition, she commented that in the working-class west of Scotland of the time there was little else to do, so the social events had seemed exciting. She joined the adult Order aged 16. Jack Ramsay, the Grand Secretary, joined late, aged 26. His motivation was principally religious. He had been inspired to join by an elder of his church. It is clear from such accounts that there is no single template for a member of the Order: all sorts of motives - family tradition, religion, social attractions - can play a part for potential members. Although we did not discuss this subject in such detail with either the AOH or the Apprentice Boys, there is no reason to doubt that a similar mixture of motives apply. The religious conviction of many AOH members, for instance, was clear. It was equally clear that family tradition played an important part. In Newry we talked to three brothers, Gerry, Bobby and Willie Davy, all members of Glasdrumman AOH.

27. Witnesses from both the Orange Order and the AOH commented on the difficulty they face in attracting new members. This in part reflects general and irreversible changes in society: the many activities and interests now open to young people, the decline in religion, changes in the structure of the family. Witnesses suggested that exactly the same difficulty in attracting new members affects many other organisations, such as the Scout movement, the Boys' Brigade, or even political parties. More especially, the Orders have faced difficulties, already alluded to, as a result of increasing political extremism within Northern Ireland over the last thirty years. We were not able to talk to the Orange Order in Northern Ireland, but, as is stated above, we were told by Jarman and Bryan that its membership appears to have suffered from an increase in the number of "blood and thunder" bands, which often have paramilitary links. Such bands are not formally affiliated to the Orange Order or under its control, even though they may march in Orange parades. Similar problems exist in Scotland, where both Orange Order and AOH appear to have lost younger members to organisations that they regard as more politically extreme, the Independent Orange Order and Western Band Alliance respectively. In Scotland both Orders have preserved a relatively non-party-political character - both of them insisting that they would not march with their more extreme counterparts. What Jarman and Bryan described as a "struggle for respectability" seems to have been won in Scotland. It is unfortunate that according to both organisations the media is unable to distinguish between the Orders and the more extremist groups.

## **PARADES AND PARADING ORGANISATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY**

28. We were concerned to explore the ways in which parades and parading organisations impact on the community as a whole. The AOH argued that their parades still had an important social function, despite the diminution in the Order's role in providing social welfare for members since the introduction of state social welfare provision. Parades brought people together in the towns to enjoy the celebration of tradition, music and "the craic". The AOH said this brought important

benefits to local economies. The same benefits are presumably brought to communities throughout Northern Ireland by undisputed parades by the Orange Order and other loyalist organisations.

29. The other side of the coin is that disputed parades risk seriously damaging local economies. Brendan Duddy and Garvan O'Doherty told the Committee that their involvement in mediation between the Apprentice Boys and the nationalist community in Derry stemmed from their position as local businessmen. The city had been damaged by the trouble surrounding parades, and their own business interests were at risk. Since beginning their involvement in mediation they had surveyed 1,270 businesses in the city. The results showed that three-quarters of businessmen endorsed their approach.

30. The Apprentice Boys told us that in Derry they have made efforts to reach out more actively to the community as a whole, trying to incorporate their celebrations into the wider cultural life of the city. This has involved, for instance, the preparation of videos, visits to schools to give talks about the history of the organisation and to hold competitions. The ABD also told the Committee that they had developed a week-long programme of civic events leading up to the August parade. This was designed to bring business into the city and to emphasise ways the two communities could share their common culture. However, some of the continuing problems associated with the Apprentice Boys' parade are discussed below (paragraph 41).

31. The social activities of the Orders are not limited to parades. Pastor Helen Walker, formerly Grand Mistress of the Ladies' Orange Association of Scotland, told the Committee about the Association's charity work. Annual donations were made to hospitals, and in autumn 2000, for example, the donation had been £9,000. Such gifts were made without any conditions as to the ultimate beneficiaries. She regretted that the media failed to pay any attention to such good work.

32. It is also clear that the parading organisations provide a focus for much day-to-day social life within their communities. The AOH in Port Glasgow mentioned dances at the AOH hall attended by over a hundred people, and regular trips on Saturday to Celtic Park to watch football. However, those who took part in such activities did not necessarily join the Order. In fact the resources of the Order in Scotland are so reduced (for example, it has only three halls of its own) that the attractions for young people, in particular, are limited.

### **WOMEN IN THE ORDERS**

33. The charity work of the Ladies' Orange Association has already been mentioned. The Association holds an annual church parade of its own, and members also participate in the major Orange Order parades. Despite these activities, the position of women in the structure of the Order was described by Mr Wilson as "semi-detached". Even the Scottish Grand Lodge, he admitted, was fundamentally male-dominated. Men wrote the rules, and men alone made up the Grand Lodge itself. This can of course be explained historically. The Orange Order and AOH, as well as

the Apprentice Boys, have their roots in the exclusively male secret societies of the eighteenth century, including the Freemasons. It takes a very long time for such traditions to change. Nevertheless, Mr Wilson accepted that times were now changing, and that the inferior status of women within the Order was increasingly hard to justify. Indeed, he described it as "ridiculous", and pointed out that the Grand Orange Lodge in New Zealand already had a female Grand Master. He believed that similar change in Scotland was inevitable. The Committee had no opportunity to discover whether the Irish Orange Lodge has considered this issue.

34. The other marching organisations are similarly male-dominated. The Apprentice Boys of Derry, as the name implies, do not admit women. The AOH admits women as associate members, with their own divisions. The upper hierarchy, however, appears to be exclusively male, although we were told in Port Glasgow that women were eligible to be elected to senior positions, and that there had formerly been a female member of the District Board of Lanark.

### **CONTESTED PARADES**

35. Disorder connected with parades shows no sign of decreasing. The reports of the Parades Commission reach only as far as March 2000. However, by July 2000, when the Committee visited Belfast and Derry, it was clear that the number of incidents of disorder relating to marches was higher than in 1999, and on a par with that in the previous four or five years<sup>[11]</sup>. The strain on police resources was intense, and the continuing damage to community relations and to the peace process impossible to calculate. In this context the Committee looked in detail at two sources of contention, the parade by the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Kilkeel and the Apprentice Boys' march in Derry.

36. The routes chosen for parades are often justified by an appeal to tradition. An example of the difficulties implicit in such an appeal is the AOH St Patrick's Day parade in Kilkeel. This was the most contentious nationalist parade in 2000, leading to what the Parades Commission described as "minor disturbances during loyalist protests" as well as bomb scares. The population of Kilkeel is about 55 per cent Protestant and 45 per cent Catholic. The AOH, however, insist on their traditional right to parade in Kilkeel. A member of the Order told the Committee that he had paraded Kilkeel for 50 years, and that the Order had paraded there for another 50 years before that. The disputes concerned a short extension of the main route, which took the march past the Presbyterian church and the War Memorial. The AOH had marched this section of the route until about 20 years ago, when the police had closed it off. In 2000 permission had been given to march this section once more.

37. However, in 1999 a new memorial, to some of the victims of the Troubles, was erected in an avenue running off the main route, about 50 metres away from the march. This was the focus of the loyalist protests. According to the AOH the memorial is far enough away from the road to avoid creating offence. However, the views of local victims' groups are very different.

38. The problem, according to the AOH, was bigotry and sectarianism on the part of the protesters, who refused to allow nationalists to march their traditional routes. The Order pointed out that there were 21 loyalist parades in Kilkeel in 2000, as against 5 nationalist parades. They were bitterly critical of the police, alleging not only that they failed to give the AOH adequate protection on St Patrick's Day, but more generally that they had done nothing to stop repeated attacks on nationalists in Kilkeel. They asserted that the police were partisan, and that members of the Orange Order were police reservists in Kilkeel. They also cited the Orange parade in Annalong, a few miles from Kilkeel, where they said that 400 police had been deployed to force an Orange parade down a *cul-de-sac* and into a 97 per cent Catholic estate[12].

39. The annual Apprentice Boys' "Relief of Derry" parade has led to disorder more than once in recent years. The traditionalism of the ABD, and the organisation's efforts to involve itself more in the life of the community, have been described above. However, it is worth also summarising briefly the events since 1995.

40. On 12 August 1995 the ABD were permitted, for the first time since 1969[13], to march the walls of the city. There was violence that day in 1995 both in Derry and in Belfast, where a "feeder" parade by the Belfast Walker Club passed along the Lower Ormeau Road. As the Parades Commission has acknowledged, the problem in Derry is peculiarly intractable because of the "unique significance and symbolism of the Walls of the City to the Apprentice Boys"[14]. Even the nationalist Bogside Residents Group, formed in 1995, admitted to the Committee that the walls on which the Apprentice Boys march could not be "re-routed". Nevertheless, all sides in Derry have made efforts to resolve differences in order to ensure that the annual parade can pass off peacefully. In 1998 an agreement was reached between the ABD and BRG so that the parade, on 8 August, could take place peacefully. However, later in the same year the groups were unable to reach a similar agreement on the Lundy Day parade on 12 December, and the Parades Commission was forced to impose conditions. In 1999 conditions were again imposed on 8 August parade, although the route was not restricted. In particular, the Parades Commission decided again to allow the "feeder" parade down the Lower Ormeau Road - a decision which, the BRG alleged, it had made "knowing full well that it would scupper the Derry parade". There was considerable trouble on the day of the parade. Despite these setbacks, the two parties were able to reach an accommodation on the Lundy Day parade, which was brought forward from the initial proposed date of 11 December to 4 December, in order to lessen the potential disruption to Christmas trade in the city. The Parades Commission's report praised the "exemplary commitment" of both sides to resolving the difficulties facing them, "in the interests both of those they represent and of the wider Londonderry community"[15]. The Commission also paid tribute to the efforts of Brendan Duddy and Garvan O'Doherty, the two businessmen who mediated between the parties. The Commission's optimism was justified in 2000, when the parade on 12 August again went ahead after an agreement between the two sides.

41. Despite the progress that has been made, the relationship between the ABD and the nationalist community is still by no means entirely harmonious. The BRG described the ABD's parade as an "annoyance", albeit not an intimidating one. While accepting that the "Relief of Derry" could be commemorated by a march in Derry, they argued that it should not be an excuse for marches elsewhere (including the Lower Ormeau Road). The Apprentice Boys, on the other hand, felt that they had already made many concessions, and were not going to be dictated to by the BRG. They insisted that the Belfast Walker Club (a Belfast branch of the ABD) were simply attempting to parade their traditional route on the Lower Ormeau Road in order to meet up with other groups at the City Hall, where they took their coaches to Derry. It is clear that there is still scope for contention between the Apprentice Boys and the nationalist community in Derry.

42. The problems surrounding the Lower Ormeau Road also highlight a general difficulty surrounding parades. Of the 3,000 or so parades held every year in Northern Ireland, a large majority are "feeder" parades, that is, parades that are no more than preliminaries to a bigger joint march later the same day. In the case of the Lower Ormeau Road, the Belfast Walker Club is just one of several groups conducting short marches before meeting at the Belfast City Hall to take coaches to Derry. This pattern is repeated throughout Northern Ireland. As Jarman and Bryan told the Committee, on a typical 12 July the RUC could be notified of some 500 parades, even though only 18 "main" parades were planned. Formerly these feeder parades would often have taken the marchers through areas occupied by their own community to a railway station from which they would take a train to join the major parade. Today the demography of the area may have changed. Often the railway station itself will be defunct, as is the case in the Lower Ormeau Road, where the Belfast clubs have not taken the train for 20 years. The result is a multiplication of the potential sources of contention. In 1999 it was the secondary issue, the "feeder" parade through the Lower Ormeau Road, that sparked trouble at the main parade in Derry.

43. The Parades Commission told the Committee that in dealing with such disputes it was constrained by the legislation upon which it is founded. It does not give permission for parades. Instead it receives notification of parades via the RUC. If a parade is not disputed the Commission does not need to intervene. If objections are made then the Commission is bound to examine and decide upon parades on a case-by-case basis. Such an approach does not lend itself to giving indications as to future strategy because any perceived half-promises may contaminate the legal process. Nor does it allow a broad or strategic approach to the issue of "feeder" parades, where several parades, some disputed and some not, will meet at a single point before converging on a single, "main" parade. Nor does such an approach make it easy for the Commission to look at issues of tradition or culture in the round, weighing the relative importance of different parades.

44. The slow progress towards a peaceful resolution of the problems surrounding the Apprentice Boys' parades in Derry shows on the one hand the intense difficulty and sensitivity of these issues. On the other hand, it demonstrates that the

communities in Northern Ireland can reach compromises and reconcile the conflicting demands of local residents and traditional parading organisations. Such compromises have only been reached with the assistance of mediators and through engagement with the Parades Commission but they also demand great moral courage from the participants. Giving evidence to the Committee, the Commission praised both the ABD and the nationalist community for their positive approach to mediation and for their readiness to engage with the Commission itself. The Apprentice Boys have also, as is noted above, made efforts to incorporate their celebrations into the wider cultural life of the city - a city that is predominantly nationalist.

45. It appears, however, that the Orange Order in Northern Ireland is unwilling to make similar efforts. This is not to say that there is any uniformity, as the structure of the Orange Order gives district and local lodges a good deal of autonomy, and the Committee was told that some local Orange lodges have undertaken initiatives similar to those of the Apprentice Boys. However, the Grand Lodge has given no national lead on such programmes to reach out into the community as a whole. The Order has also, regrettably, pursued a policy of non-engagement with the Parades Commission. The Commission told us that in February 2000 they had written to the Order, but received no reply. The Grand Lodge then voted not to engage with the Commission, although there was an impression that some local lodges might be prepared to enter into talks. There were no direct formal contacts in 2000, and the best that could be achieved was for individual members of the Order to meet with the Commission in other capacities. Formally, the Commission had to rely on the reports of authorised officers, acting under the auspices of the mediation network, but in some places the Orange Order would not engage even with the authorised officers. In contrast we were told that the nationalist community had a general policy of engagement with the Parades Commission.

46. The situation in Scotland is very different from that in Northern Ireland. There has been little trouble at parades by either the Orange Order or the AOH in recent years. However, the AOH claimed that there were still pockets of Protestantism, such as the towns of Larkhall or Greengairs in Lanarkshire, where Catholics were unwelcome. The Order would never parade in such areas. In Port Glasgow, on the other hand, the local council had since the 1940s pursued a housing policy of mixing Protestant and Catholic populations, and as a result there was no sectarianism and no controversy concerning parades in the town. The AOH did, however, claim that the Orange Order marched in some largely Catholic areas such as Coatbridge, and that the police had to intervene to ensure the security of the marchers. On the other hand, both the AOH and the Orange Order emphasised that they would not march where they were unwelcome, and had no problem changing "traditional" routes.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

47. The Committee is extremely grateful to all the witnesses who met with them in the course of this enquiry. The issue of parades is clouded by controversy and by intense feeling on all sides. Nevertheless, we regard it as a hopeful sign that so many

of those involved in parading disputes were willing to engage in such frank discussion with us. We regret that the Orange Order in Ireland did not take the opportunity to present their case to us, and that we have therefore not been able to take account of their views in preparing this report. In contrast, we are very encouraged by the readiness of the Grand Orange Lodge in Scotland to discuss such issues so candidly.

48. The media have an important part to play in dissipating public ignorance of the role of the marching Orders and their parades in the cultural and social lives of their communities. Witnesses from the Orders complained that they and their parades had received a bad press, though some acknowledged this was at least in part deserved. In Scotland, however, the Orange Order felt that it was wrong to regard it as in any way responsible for or connected with the excesses occurring in Northern Ireland. While acknowledging the part the media have to play in educating the public a corresponding openness on the part of the Orders themselves, particularly the Orange Order, is also vital if the ignorance is to be overcome.

49. The Orders play a complex part in the life of the community. They have a varied social function: doing valuable charity work, bringing people together at social gatherings, and, despite the fact that the role of friendly societies has been largely supplanted by the welfare state, providing some continuing social benefits. Furthermore, no-one who meets with the officers of the Orange Order or the Ancient Order of Hibernians can doubt their religious sincerity. They remain exclusive organisations, dedicated to the Protestant and Roman Catholic faiths respectively. Such exclusiveness has created its own problems for the Orders in Scotland, where they appear to have a somewhat ambivalent relationship with church hierarchies committed to ecumenism.

50. Another aspect of the exclusiveness of the Orders is the limited role they grant to women. We welcome indications that the Orders in Scotland are prepared to contemplate admitting women to senior positions within the hierarchy, and hope that their brethren in Ireland will follow suit. For the Orders to play the fullest possible part in the lives of their communities it is important that they should invite women as well as men to contribute.

51. The Orders also provide a powerful and well-established focus for the communities' sense of historical identity, both in Northern Ireland and further afield. The Protestant Orders celebrate the memory of the Glorious Revolution, and in particular of the key events that took place in Ireland: the "Relief of Derry" and the Battle of the Boyne. We do not question their right to do so, nor, after proper consultation of local communities, their right to make use of the material relics of these events - notably the walls of Derry. Celebrating these events is more than a purely sectarian exercise, and it was clear from our discussions with the Orange Order in Scotland that the significance of the Glorious Revolution, as the source of the British constitutional settlement, continues to be deeply felt. Similarly, for the Ancient Order of Hibernians the parades on 17 March and 15 August to celebrate St Patrick's Day and the Feast of the Assumption remain highly symbolic events.

52. Parades combine all these different elements: the sense of community, religion and history. The majority of parades are harmonious occasions, bringing people together and in the process benefiting local economies. Unfortunately, parades too often become the catalyst for displays of political intolerance and sectarianism. This is partly because the marching Orders are not themselves homogeneous, nor do they wholly control those who participate in parades. To some extent this is inevitable. However, it is the responsibility of the Orders in Ireland to make every effort possible, like their brethren in Scotland, to ensure that non-affiliated groups - in particular bands with paramilitary links - do not hijack "traditional" parades. In the case of the Irish Orange Order there is a possibility that by exercising more stringent control over marchers the Order may diminish its own standing in the Protestant community. We believe this is a risk worth taking.

53. There may be some cases where the "traditional" argument for a particular route is relatively clear-cut; the Apprentice Boys' march on the walls of Derry is an obvious example. While many nationalists in Derry resent the continuance of this parade, we accept that the events of the "Relief of Derry", and the symbolism of the walls themselves, are essential elements of the cultural identity of both communities in the city. However, problems have often arisen where the perception of tradition - in particular the use of accustomed routes - has diverged from the reality of social change. This is particularly the case with "feeder" parades, which may take marchers through an estate where members of the opposed community now live, to the site of a long-defunct railway station where they once caught a train to the day's "main" parade. In such circumstances the argument on the basis of tradition is far less clear-cut. Such parades can be quickly transformed into assertions of political power or of territorial rights.

54. It is also incumbent on the marching organisations to accept that tradition is not constant or unchanging. Many factors play a part in shaping and changing tradition. A particular route may have been chosen because of the demographic structure of the area decades ago. If this demography has changed, as is often the case, the notion that a particular "route" must be immutable, when the reality its choice reflected is long-gone, may be hard to justify. Similarly, if a particular route has not been marched for twenty or thirty years, and the buildings lining it and people living along it have changed, the fact that it was once marched in the past does not necessarily justify marching it again today. All sides of the community will have to show sensitivity and a spirit of compromise if such seemingly intractable issues are to be resolved.

55. A necessary first step to such a resolution must be full engagement with the Parades Commission and with mediators through Ulster. The Parades Commission is not perfect, and is to some extent hindered by its own statutory obligations. The Commission has to judge hundreds of cases every year, taking each case on its merits, and it may be that some of its decisions are flawed. Nevertheless, the work as a whole of the Parades Commission has been invaluable, not least in providing a neutral, impartial forum within which arguments for and against particular parades can be put. But it is vital that all parties engage fully and in good faith with the

Commission. The nationalist community, including the Ancient Order of Hibernians and the Bogside Residents' Group, and some elements of the loyalist community, notably the Apprentice Boys, have made this engagement. It is deeply regrettable that the Grand Orange Lodge has not done the same.

56. The Committee applauds the efforts being made by all parties in Derry. The Apprentice Boys have not only shown themselves willing to enter open dialogue with the Parades Commission and with the nationalist community, but have also made substantial efforts to incorporate their celebrations into the wider cultural life of the city. For their part, the nationalist community, including the Bogside Residents' Group, have also shown themselves willing to accept the right of the minority Protestant population to commemorate the "Relief of Derry" by marching on the city walls. The two businessmen who have mediated between the two sides, Brendan Duddy and Garvan O'Doherty, have shown great courage in facilitating the dialogue. We share the optimism expressed in the most recent report of the Parades Commission, and look to Derry as an example to the whole of Northern Ireland of the difficult but ultimately fruitful path of dialogue, accommodation and compromise.

**57. The damage that parading disputes have inflicted and continue to inflict on the Northern Ireland community is considerable. A resolution of such disputes would be correspondingly beneficial. Parades need not create conflict. They can form an accepted part of social life, bringing people together to celebrate their cultural heritage and benefiting local economies, and we look forward to the day when this will be possible in Northern Ireland. We therefore urge all parties to seek resolutions to disputed parades, based on the principles of law, dialogue, mutual respect and consent.**

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#### **Draft Resolution**

**That the Body notes the Report of the Environmental and Social Committee on the Cultural Significance of Parades, and agrees with the conclusions and recommendations of the Report, which should be forwarded to both Governments for their observations.**

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1 See Anthony Buckley and Kenneth Anderson, *Brotherhoods in Ireland* (Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, Cultra, 1988).

2 For an account of notable events or instances of disorder connected with parades in the nineteenth century see *For God and Ulster: An Alternative Guide to the Loyal Orders* (Pat Finucane Centre, 1997), pp. 16-19.

3 Neil Jarman and Dominic Bryan, *Parades and Protest: a Discussion of Parading Disputes in Northern Ireland* (University of Ulster, 1996), p. 4.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 5.

5 Jarman and Bryan note that between 1921 and 1969 "only three Cabinet members in Northern Ireland governments at Stormont were not at some point Orangemen", p. 9.

6 See the North Committee's *Independent Review of Parades and Marches* (1997), p. 30.

7 The accession of William and Mary to the Scots Crown in 1689 finally settled the long-running dispute between the Presbyterians and Episcopalians within the Church of Scotland in the Presbyterians' favour, by virtue of the enactment of the Confession of Faith Ratification Act 1690, which gave statutory effect to the 1647 *Westminster Confession of Faith*.

8 The Covenanters were so named because of their adherence to the Solemn League and Covenant of 1643, by which they were pledged to maintain Presbyterian forms of church government and worship. After the re-imposition of episcopacy by King Charles II the Covenanters rebelled three times, in 1666, 1679 and 1685. The brutal persecution that followed these rebellions became known to Scots historians as the "killing times". Most notorious of the persecutors was John Graham of Claverhouse, who subsequently, after the Glorious Revolution, became leader of the forces loyal to the Stuarts; he was finally killed at the battle of Killiecrankie. Although the Williamite government re-established Presbyterianism the Covenants were not renewed, and dissident covenanting movements continued to emerge and flourish throughout the eighteenth century, particularly in the south-west. See Nigel Cameron: *Dictionary of Scottish Church History and Theology* (T & T Clark - Edinburgh, 1993) pp. 218-9.

9 The Orange Order continues to be a constituent part of the Ulster Unionist Council, which directs the policy of the UUP.

10 For a discussion of the relationship between the Orange Order and Scottish Conservatism see David Seawright, *An Important Matter of Principle: the Decline of the Scottish Conservative and Unionist Party* (1999), pp. 73-92.

11 However, some of the disorder in 2000 seems to have been intra-communal rather than inter-communal, particularly where different loyalist factions appear to have been competing for supremacy with their communities.

12 The attitude of the RUC had led the members of the AOH interviewed in Newry to state that they would never recommend anyone to join either the RUC or the proposed Police Service of Northern Ireland, as was being considered at the time of the interview.

13 It was following the riots during the ABD's parade in Derry in 1969 that British troops were first deployed in the streets in the Northern Ireland in the current troubles.

14 Annual Report for 1998-99 of the Parades Commission, p. 33.

15 Report for 1999-2000 of the Parades Commission, p. 40.

## **APPENDIX**

### ***Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee relating to the Report:***

#### *Members visiting Belfast and Derry on 3rd-5th July 2000:*

Mr Nick Ainger MP  
Ms Jean Corston MP  
Mr Jimmy Deenihan TD  
Mr John McFall MP  
Mr Brendan McGahon TD  
Ms Marian McGennis TD  
Mr Kevin McNamara MP

#### *Meeting in Galway on 10th October 2000 (Plenary):*

Ms Jean Corston MP  
Senator Edward Haughey  
Mr Conor Lenihan TD  
Mr John McFall MP  
Mr Kevin McNamara MP (in the Chair)  
Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin TD  
Mr Lembit Öpik MP

The Committee deliberated.

#### *Visit to Newry on 17th January 2001:*

Ms Jean Corston MP  
Senator Edward Haughey  
Mr Brendan McGahon TD  
Ms Marian McGennis TD  
Mr Kevin McNamara MP

#### *Visit to Glasgow on 29th January 2001:*

Mr Conor Lenihan TD  
Mr John McFall MP  
Mr Brendan McGahon TD  
Ms Marian McGennis TD  
Mr Kevin McNamara MP

#### *Meeting in London on 12<sup>th</sup> February 2001:*

Mr Conor Lenihan TD

Ms Marian McGennis TD  
Mr Kevin McNamara MP (in the Chair)  
Mr Lembit Öpik MP

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report (The Cultural Significance of Parades) proposed by the Chairman,  
brought up and read.

*Ordered*, That the report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 and 2 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 3 to 12 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 13 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 14 to 17 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 18 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 19 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 20 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 21 to 23 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 24 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 25 read and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 26 to 27 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 28 read and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 29 to 31 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 32 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 33 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 34 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 35 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 36 read and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 37 to 38 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 39 to 41 read and agreed to;  
Paragraphs 42 to 49 read, amended and agreed to;  
A paragraph (new paragraph 50) brought up by the Chairman, read and inserted;  
Paragraphs 51 to 53 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 54 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 55 read, amended and agreed to;  
Paragraph 56 read and agreed to;  
Paragraph 57 read, amended and agreed to.

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*Ordered*, That the Report be made to the Body.

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***Witnesses who met the Committee:***

*Belfast and Derry, 3rd to 5th July 2000:*

Northern Ireland Office

Dr Dominic Bryan and Mr Neil Jarman, Queen's University, Belfast  
Parades Commission  
Dr Anthony Buckley, Ulster Folk and Transport Museum  
Mr Garvan O'Doherty and Mr Brendan Duddy, Derry  
Bogside Residents' Group  
Apprentice Boys of Derry

*Newry, 17th January 2001:*

Ancient Order of Hibernians (Board of Erin)

*Glasgow, 29th January 2001:*

Grand Orange Lodge of Scotland  
Ancient Order of Hibernians (Provincial Board of Scotland)