

Witness Name: G Beriault

Statement No. 1

Exhibits: GB1

Dated: *Nov. 9th 2007*

THE ROSEMARY NELSON INQUIRY

Witness statement of Georges Beriault

I, Georges Beriault will say as follows:-

1. I am part of the Coalition for Peace in Ireland ("the Coalition"). We are a republican support group, formed in 1980. Our numbers have varied over the years, although by 1980 Ireland had become an issue in Québec. We are based in Montreal and Québec, Canada.
2. Québec is a mostly French-speaking area of Canada with its own national identity question. In every census since about the mid-nineteenth century, when asked about their background, around fifteen to twenty-five percent of the Québécois have claimed Irish descent. This is mainly because the area was a terminus for the famine ships which were sent to Northern America and Canada in the nineteenth century. In fact, we have the only contemporary famine commemoration stone anywhere in the world.
3. There has been a huge Irish community in Québec since the famine as people inter-married with the Québécois. There is therefore a very strong Irish flavour to the community. The people living in and around Montreal and Québec can see parallels between the history of Québec and that of Ireland and can relate to the struggle they face.

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4. We began as the Québec Ireland Committee, but this evolved into the Coalition very quickly. It is a different type of organisation to Noraid and has been involved in various campaigns in Ireland, such as the campaign against the use of plastic bullets.
5. I am a High School teacher and am not paid for the work I do with the Coalition. My role is to organise trips to Ireland to enable people to see what is actually going on there. It is important to the Coalition that people from the international community understand the political situation and what it is like for the 'average' person living in Northern Ireland. On tours organised by the Coalition, what you see is what you get. We have no need to propagandise. We have organised tours for a wide variety of people including trade-unionists, lawyers, sociologists, politicians, (both municipal and federal) and professors.
6. It is the Coalition's aim to make sure that when people come over to Ireland they speak to and see both sides of the divide; this pays dividends. We ensure that we organise balanced tours to make sure that people who have sympathies for Sinn Fein or whoever see both sides of the divide. We have arranged for people to talk, for example, to the Red Hand Commandos (although I cannot recall who was our main point of contact) and we have taken people to the Shankhill area as well as organising meetings and visits to the Republican areas. We have been doing this for some time, although between 1997 and 2000 we were especially active.
7. When people go over to Ireland and see what is happening, they go back home and spread the word. This ensures that people are aware of the struggle for peace there. Canadians in general are naïve as to how the British uses the media to spread misinformation and the misrepresentation of a situation. A commonly held view in the Canadian media is of Britain as a paternal figure who has been dealing with juvenile, warring factions. The Coalition has tried to show that this is not necessarily the case.
8. Many Canadians see their role as being important in the peace process; we are not like the USA and do not come over here wearing "IRA" t-shirts. It was a shock to see

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the Americans wearing IRA berets all those years ago. Our belief in the value of making people see both sides of the divide has been borne out by experience.

9. I am not sure that the RUC knew how to deal with us when we started visiting Ireland. Their attitude was that we shouldn't be asking questions: they took the view that we are all in the Commonwealth together and if the RUC or another state institution had been criticised, the Government expect the Canadians to be there on their side. It didn't always go down very well when we were asking what they perceived to be controversial questions that were difficult for them to answer.
10. As I have stated, the Coalition members are not paid for the work they do or the time they spend in Ireland. Some of the Canadian politicians who have visited may have had their flights paid for by us, but I have no doubt that they would have come along anyway. Any money that was raised by the Coalition would go towards paying for delegates to attend during the tours.
11. The size of the Coalition varied over time. Membership depends on what is flavour of the month: it might be Ireland, Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, etc. However, over the years, we have kept a group of roughly fourteen to sixteen people who we can rely on. Some have moved away, had kids, or got divorced or married, but we have tended to keep a core bunch of people to assist us.
12. I think my first visit to Ireland was in around 1974. I saw what was happening and wanted to try to do something about it. It took a further four years or so for the Coalition to really get going. However, a lot of work was still done in the meantime: the aim was to spread as much information about what was happening there to the international community as possible during the Troubles. This is essentially the purpose of the Coalition, to spread information: the Coalition is not a fund raising group.
13. In the seventies and eighties, there was a whole mix of lefties, Marxists, Trotskyists - all kinds of people who helped the Coalition bring its delegates to Ireland. However, people would have to leave their politics at the door - we did not have discussions

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about whether Trotsky or whoever was right or not. We felt there were real human rights problems which needed to be exposed regardless of political beliefs. Our work in Ireland these days is still the same, although it has quietened down now of course because of the peace process.

14. As I have stated, we would see a whole variety of people including the Parades Commission, the DUP, the UUP and anyone else who would talk to us. We also met with Sinn Fein and others. I think we stunned a lot of the other non-governmental organisations by taking on the role of international observers. Those groups were soon asking us to be included on our visits; lots of people were being told about the nature of our visits and the groups that we managed to arrange to see. I think seeing both sides of the divide was what appealed to people.
15. I have been asked to describe the role of an International Observer. I think that the role of an international observer depends on who you speak to. From my perspective, our role was to monitor human rights violations and infringements of civil liberties, but also to inform the politicians and the wider audience of what issues were affecting all of the communities there. We brought politicians over from Canada to see the events for themselves and to experience the extreme sectarian nature of what was going on. Some American groups were made up of liberation theologians (some groups included nuns for example), and they were involved in focusing on peace and justice, being motivated in part by Roman Catholic liberation theology. Other groups had a more practical monitoring and reporting role, whilst maintaining the focus on peace and justice, others had no link to religious groups at all.
16. Prior to the Peace Process, I think that the Coalition had quite a high profile. For example, Warren Almand, one of the delegates, was a former Solicitor-General of Canada and a QC, as well as heading The Centre for Human Rights in Montreal. He became involved and attended one of our tours. I think we got additional publicity because a young woman made a film about the troubles and she included footage of

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the Coalition's work. I recall that she came to Montreal to thank the group for "making a difference".

17. As I have stated, we acted as observers but also visited people to discuss their issues. At various stages we met Rosemary Nelson, Robert Hamill's sister and various other 'high profile' individuals. The mix of people was key. On one night, for example, we would meet Brendan McKenna from the Garvaghy Road and on another night we would meet [REDACTED], who was from the Orange Order.
18. Sometimes groups who went on a trip would observe, produce reports and publicise them. Some were very well written. Other members preferred to report more locally to their colleagues and local politicians. The Coalition always made a point of having documents translated into French so that they could be sent out to trade union delegates and the wider community in or around Québec and Canada. The recipients would attend solidarity evenings at which our reports were discussed. It would largely be dependent upon the content and participants on the tours (who went, what was talked about, questions that were asked and details of the events that were seen) as to whether a report was produced or not.
19. Reports are typed, often on my computer and then handed out. Not all of the reports are kept or filed as we do not have a central office as such. Our HQ is simply my house! All of the Coalition's history that we have kept is in my filing cabinets at home.
20. I visited Ireland every year between 1974 and around 2000. I have therefore been present at both the Ormeau Road and Garvaghy Road marches. I was involved in various events and protests during the 1980's but my attendance at events depended on when I was able to be in Ireland.
21. I specifically recall that in 1993, we went over to the Ormeau Road there and I got my first experience of the terrifying "siege" situation. The RUC were stood in front of the Loyalists and facing the Nationalists, even though the Loyalists were the ones

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- causing the trouble. There was a steel wall of Land Rovers dividing the two sides and keeping the community in, which was highly intimidating.
22. The Land Rovers would drive in and simply block off the roads so that nothing could pass between them. The people caught behind them at the time would stay there until the Land Rovers moved or the RUC decided they were going to let them leave. Mothers and fathers could not get groceries, go to work or walk their children to school. This situation was called a 'lock down' and this happened regularly during marching season, and with varying degrees of severity. The lock-down would vary in length and would take effect very quickly. The division would enable the parade to take place on one side of the line and was designed to prevent attacks on the parades themselves. The parade that was causing discontent in the local community would then take place while the community was 'locked-down'.
23. In the mid to late 1990s the communities started to co-ordinate themselves through their leaders, such as [REDACTED] (Orneau Road) and Brendan McKenna (Garvagh Road). They formed a myriad of residents' groups, each of which would be asking for permission for marches from their own community to pass through their areas or seeking guarantees that would prevent marches organised by the other community from taking place.
24. I recall that a call was put out by the Garvagh Road Residents' Coalition for international observers to go and attend Garvagh Road in 1997. The residents' organisations sent letters out to various groups asking them to come along and observe.
25. It was important that we had politicians there so that they could go away and spread information as to what was happening after the visit. We therefore put together a delegation of two federal politicians and one provincial politician (Roger Gallaway), Christopher Axworthy and Warren Almand. We were acting in conjunction with the IOIC (Information On Ireland Campaign) from Toronto, when we arranged the visit but the Coalition paid for their travel tickets.

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26. The 1997 visit was the first real international observer role that we undertook. 1997 was the first year that the RUC "cleaned" the streets of protestors. Looking back, the tension at the time was steadily increasing in 1997/1998 especially, the tension could be cut with a knife. The Loyalists were obviously angry and at the same time nervous: I think that everyone thought that something was going to happen due to the increased tension but no one knew what.
27. The Orangemen wanted to march back down Garvaghy Road on their return from Drumcree Church: Garvaghy Road was the main road through the area and was quite wide but oddly-shaped. There was a grassy area where we were and a knoll on top where the RUC Land Rovers were parked. I would say that there were a couple of hundred Land Rovers parked, head to butt-end all the way up the road. One half of the community was locked-down on one side, the other half on the other side. Nobody went from one side to the other.
28. I recall that there was certainly an issue about whether or not the march was going ahead in 1997. Right up until the end, when it did go ahead, no one knew whether or not it would actually happen. It is no wonder the tension on the ground was so bad. No one in authority seemed to have made a conclusive decision about the march. They should have made a decision one way or the other, but there was no communication from the government via the police about what would happen. People all had views on what was going to happen and were stood around talking about it, but no one knew for certain. Many rumours circulated around but nothing definite was announced by the RUC or the politicians.
29. When people started to gather on the road in the early hours of the Sunday morning, the RUC moved in. In places, the RUC had vehicles were closely linked up and down the road at first, but not quite close enough to form a total lock-down and so people got through and out onto the streets. The RUC tussled with people; even those that had no Republican links.

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30. The family I was staying with in 1997 were very religious but were unable to go to church on the Sunday morning as a result of the trouble. They could not cross the road to attend mass since the lock-down would last as long as the Superintendent of Police said it would last. The lock-down definitely lasted several days.
31. The march went through on the Sunday and people got very emotional about it. By that stage, there were all kinds of international observers there, including US congressmen and state representatives. This gave the British government a bit of a black eye since there was then huge pressure on them not to allow the march to take place.
32. I remember that when the RUC moved in, it was all pretty spontaneous; the people running our billets were turning on lights and telling us to get out when it looked like something was going to happen. I went to bed with my clothes on on the Saturday night, as did all of the international observers, in case the march was suddenly allowed through. Everyone else on the road did the same.
33. I was shaken awake by the people who I was billeted with and told that the "Peelers" were moving the Land Rovers into the street and if we stayed where we were, we would get locked-down. Had we remained there much longer, we would simply have been stuck. Everyone knew they wanted to divide the street and therefore if people milled around in the middle, they thought the RUC would not be able to block it off.
34. People gathered in the road and with the glow of the night sky, there was a kind of other-worldliness about it all. The police were stood around in riot gear watching the people milling around on the road. Eventually, people finally decided to sit down in peaceful protest. They had seen the RUC closing in and knew that they wanted to close the street off so people sat down to try to prevent the march being able to pass down the road.
35. The purpose behind us sitting in the road was to try and prevent the lock-down, to hinder the planning behind it and to stop the infrastructure that led to the lock-down being put in place. People did not want to be locked-down so everybody said "stand

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in the middle of the road". I don't think that even the police were sure what was going to happen. It was noticeable that when they got their orders to clear the road, they acted very quickly and we all got a thrashing. The RUC waded into the protestors hitting them with batons and dragging them out of the road. The police hit the protestors on any part of the body; I remember Dennis Donaldson approached me, pointing to his head saying "look where I have been hit".

36. Warren Allmand was unfortunately not woken in his billet when the commotion started, which was very unacceptable. I wanted to get all the tour delegates together so that they could see what was happening. I did not want everybody caught up in different places and some being locked-down in different areas. I therefore needed to leave the area to get more people and ensure that the international observers were able to see what was going on. I also wanted to check that they were all safe. In addition, I needed to get my jacket which had "International Observer" on it, which I had forgotten in the rush to get out onto the street in time.
37. As I walked up and down looking for the other observers, I talked to various people in the crowd. I tried to leave, but the "Peelers" asked where I was going and I was pushed back in to the crowd. The crowd then locked arms with me and made me sit down and join the protest. I am not sure whether other people were trying to leave; I did not know many people from the community at the time.
38. It has been said that there was no actual order given by the RUC to the community to clear the street and announce that the march was going ahead. I am certain that this is not the case as the announcement was made by an officer right beside me. I told this to Ronnie Flanagan at a meeting held at a later stage during the visit; that the community was definitely told by the RUC to clear the road.
39. Although the crowd was given a warning, it was drowned out by the sheer volume of noise that was around at the time. The policeman who made the announcement was around 65, pot-bellied and wearing a white shirt, bullet-proof vest, tie and a hat that clearly identified him as a policeman. He stepped out between the bonnets of two

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Land Rovers and read a statement with a bull horn; unfortunately the bull horn was not working and he did not shout or try to get people's attention.

40. As he was stood between the bumpers of the Land Rovers, you would also only have seen him from straight in front and, as his bull horn was not working, most people simply would not have heard him. I was standing around eight to nine feet away. I knew that he was reading a statement out about clearing the streets but I could not hear most of what he said. I have been asked how I knew what announcement he was making if I couldn't hear him clearly. I have a background in trade-unionism and know from experience that this is the kind of thing that is usually being read out when there are situations involving protests and picketing. I am confident that a lot of the other people who were ordinary residents would not have recognised the situation and couldn't have heard the message that was being read.
41. Following the march, the police said that they gave people the opportunity to leave the road before they cleared it. However, when I tried to leave the road I was prevented from doing so by a boiler-suited policeman (no badges or numbers were displayed and from my experience I knew that even if you did see numbers, these often failed to correspond to the officers wearing them). By this time I knew that something was going to happen and that the others from the delegation were caught up at the other end. I wanted to go and meet up with them but I was prevented from doing so by the RUC and got pushed back into the crowd. I cannot recall specifically what time this occurred but it happened after day break.
42. As I have stated, when I was pushed back into the crowd, people grabbed my arms and made me sit down. I got caught up in the protest. People were singing and others were praying. There was a lot of tension in the air and people felt better if they could pray, I suppose!
43. The RUC moved in closer towards us and eventually started coming into the crowd, lifting people up and carrying them out between the Land Rovers. Some people

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fought them, and batons were used to restrain them; those of us sitting on the ground knew that we would be next in line to be hit.

44. Four RUC officers walked over and picked me up; I didn't resist. I should mention that I train three to four nights a week and have a black belt in karate. I could have fought if I wanted to, but I am 54 years of age and only four months before I had had chemotherapy for non-hodgkins lymphoma so I was not at full strength. Whilst I did not resist, there were plenty of people who were fighting back but they were beaten, some severely.
45. I thought I was going to get off lightly because I decided not to resist. As I have stated, the police were wearing riot equipment, batons, plastic bullets, boiler suits, which were all relatively new in 1997. The residents had seen them before, although they were new to us as international observers. It was all very intimidating and pretty nasty; the implication of putting a plain uniform on without clear identification was particularly concerning to me.
46. When the police got to me, I was picked up and put down away from the crowd. Then I was lifted and stretched out before being carried over to the line of Land Rovers. Two of them were hauling me along, with another of them walking alongside. One of them brought down a baton on my leg; he raised it over and above his head with both hands and then brought it down as hard as he could on my shin. I should emphasise that I was not resisting and was in no position to fight back. I still have the scar from that attack. I was then thrown over the bonnet of a Land Rover and landed on the ground. Next to me there was a community leader (whose name I cannot remember) who was having a heart attack. They had to allow an ambulance in to come and take him away. After I was hit I went up to the Community Centre and had my injury treated.
47. Many people got hit on Garvaghy Road: people got whacked hard. I think the GRRRC had a huge file on the number of injuries and the complaints made against the RUC as a result of their ill treatment in 1997. People were suffering from gashes to the head

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and various other injuries (although the gashes to the head always look bad because of the amount of bleeding). There was a lot of indiscriminate hitting with batons, on heads, elbows, legs, everywhere. People were really being pounded by the RUC. You knew you were going to get it next if you stayed around.

48. I am aware that various people made complaints about the way the police dealt with the Garvaghy Road incident in 1997 and that letters were sent asking them to identify the individual officers involved. These letters were a joke since the uniforms were unidentifiable, as I have mentioned. There was never enough information and therefore the police were never properly pursued in relation to their actions on Garvaghy Road.
49. The RUC sent me a letter about a year to 18 months after the incident asking me if I had any complaints; their letter asked me whether I recognised any of the police, knowing full well that I could not have done. You were not able to recognise anything other than the occasional inflection of the accents. Even then all you could say about them was minimal as they all talked pretty much the same. None of them were wearing anything that could identify them. There was no real way of knowing who they were, although various people said that they heard English accents amongst them. Whether they sent for reinforcements from the mainland, I do not know; they were simply a mass of dark "imperial raiders" in a "Darth Vader" or "Robocop" style outfit.
50. I wanted to pursue a complaint and indeed indicated in my response letter to the RUC that I would pursue it. In reality, I did not actively pursue my own complaint since I thought it was pointless. I didn't take the letter from the RUC too seriously. The impression I got from the RUC letter was that they were simply doing their job and ticking the boxes; they were not expecting much of a response and I had no confidence they would do anything even if they did get one. However, I did give an affidavit about all this to the RUC and guess this was sent off to wherever, probably Gough Barracks. I am not sure if I have a copy of this anymore.

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51. Brendan McKenna was there in 1997, although the only time I saw him was when he had meetings with the monitors and other international observers. There were monitors within the community to check that there was no under-age drinking, petrol bombs being thrown or other trouble like that.
52. Shortly after the Garvaghy Road march in 1997 we also had a meeting with Ronnie Flanagan, then Chief Constable of the RUC, although I cannot now recall the date of this meeting.
53. The meeting with Ronnie Flanagan came into being because Warren Allmand made us all sit down and write affidavits as to what had happened on the Garvaghy Road. These were signed by us all on 11 July 1997 (RNI 303.252-253). By that time, we were off the Garvaghy Road and the various incidents had finished.
54. We had arranged to meet Mr Flanagan prior to our visit as part of the tour and so used the opportunity to report on the events we had witnessed. Warren had a list of things to raise; he was a meticulous planner and he was always making notes. He knew he was playing with a heavy-hitter and knew what to ask first in terms of covering background information. He wanted to ask about policing issues generally and then followed with questions on the events on the Garvaghy Road specifically.
55. I do recall attending the meeting with Mr Flanagan. We were welcomed well enough in his sumptuous office. There must have been about eight or nine ranking RUC Officers there, a couple of whom were quite young. The meeting started politely enough and then went downhill. Warren raised concerns with Ronnie Flanagan about what had happened on the Garvaghy Road that year and he had effectively said "give us a report" and so we did. I remember Ronnie Flanagan became very upset when we started to tell him about what we had witnessed and the way his officers had behaved.
56. Warren Allmand is an experienced lawyer and had been a Member of Parliament for 30-odd years. He waded in and used a bit of humour, talking about what happened. Ronnie Flanagan started to go off the deep end and was really angry with Warren. He was saying things like "what would you know, you were asleep". Warren took this

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very badly although it was true that his billet had been irresponsible and didn't wake him up and get him out in time.

57. Warren was bluntly asking why the beatings were happening and why it was that excessive force was being used against people who were protesting peacefully. Ronnie Flanagan simply turned it round by saying again that Warren didn't see anything and was asleep. This was a bad way to deal with the situation because clearly other observers such as myself had seen what went on and we were there to put our experiences across. We had all written affidavits concerning our observations.
58. Warren countered by saying that he was working with all of us and trusted us and had no reason not to believe what was being said in our affidavits. What we had seen and observed was also supported by the statements of other people who were there. Each had their own experiences and these were noted and presented in their respective ways.
59. I raised the issue of the announcement which was intended to clear the road, but which no-one could have heard or understood. When I told Ronnie Flanagan this at the meeting, he initially denied that it happened. However, when he looked around other policemen in his group nodded acknowledging that the announcement had been made in that manner. Ronnie Flanagan then made some excuses and looked fairly flustered and irate and left the meeting saying that he had something else to do. There were about 8 or 9 high-ranking RUC officers in the meeting with him and you would have thought that they would have backed their Chief on this, but they confirmed what I was saying. You could tell that he was really fed up by the end of the meeting because of the amount of flack that was coming his way. I don't think that Rosemary Nelson was mentioned during this meeting.
60. I cannot recall the list of attendees at that meeting. It was a mix of the delegates over that year, others were attending other meetings.

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61. The next year we managed to meet Mr Flanagan again (although I cannot recall the date of the meeting or who attended); Ronnie Flanagan came along and gave people in our delegation a hug and was fairly jovial, but this was not viewed very well by members of the delegation.
62. The police's role in 1997 was very scary and very menacing. In 1998, when the parade did not go down the Garvaghy Road, it was still menacing but you could see that things were changing. 1998 to 1999 was a transition period but comments were still being made by the police which were sectarian in nature and were designed to put people's backs up.
63. The police tactics were designed to intimidate through continued questioning of people and by putting fear into residents. A number of complaints were made by observers in relation to their attitude. The same things happened in 1998 as 1997, such as the beatings of protestors, although it was less prevalent.
64. It was 1998 when something really went off with Rosemary Nelson. I recall that a complaint was logged that she had been assaulted by the RUC. I knew about the allegations, but didn't see what happened with Rosemary and was not aware of any specific details. I understand that she was down on the road and that she was assaulted by the RUC. I only met her a couple of times as part of the tours (and I can't recall when or what we discussed) and did not really know her particularly well and am unable to comment on that incident in any greater detail.
65. I recall that in 1998 men and equipment were brought in to block off the road to allow work on a moat to be carried out; earth-moving equipment was used to build a moat between the Nationalist area and the Drumcree Church. There was barbed wire on it and the same kind of tension in the air as in 1997. The moat, the steel gate and fence that were put up all made it that much more difficult for there to be any kind of trouble. The Orange Order used to march up, mark time and then march back. They would ask symbolically to be let through but would always be told "no" and sent back by the soldiers.

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66. The RUC did not do much to move the protestors back; they liked to stare at them and would sit on the steps of their Land Rovers, often with open hands to their faces (which was a reference to the five young men shot in the betting shop up on the Armagh Road). Some would say that the RUC ought to be impartial although it is obvious that they were not always so.
67. I recall the Orangemen doing the "bouncy thing" along the bottom of the Garvagh Road. This is a routine whereby they jump up and down with their hands by their sides. It is symbolic of how Robert Hamill was murdered and is designed to provoke a reaction from the local Catholic residents.
68. In terms of documents, I will check back through my personal files and see what notes I have. I am sure I have photos and videos of the Garvagh Road in 1997 and 1998. I know that other people took photos and video footage. There were some very good shots of the moat, for example. Things happen so quickly that often you are unable to take photographs or get video footage.
69. At one point, in 1997 or 1998, we had permission to bring observers "over the moat" and stand with the Loyalists. This fell through because of the violence and because there were no guarantees for the safety of the people that we take on the trips. We obviously couldn't put these people in danger.
70. When things had calmed down in 1998, Rosemary met members of our delegation at a meeting (I cannot recall the location of this meeting). Rosemary described to the delegation the amount of intimidation that had been suffered by the Hamill family and informed us that various intimidating or threatening letters and other such items had been sent to her. She said that this amounted to harassment of the Hamills and her; she spoke very forcefully about it and outlined how she responded to what she called "les menaces", by simply getting on with her job.
71. She showed members of the delegation a couple of threatening letters she had received. I was at the back of the room and wanted delegates to see them so I did not get personally involved or look at these letters, although it was clear from the

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conversation that the letters were very intimidating and contained direct threats to Rosemary. It appeared to be water off a duck's back; she was saying that she got these kind of things all the time. As I said, I did not see them: it was not my job to look at them, but merely to ensure that other people did. I do, however, have a pretty good idea as to what they contained, from talking to people who did see them and this is why I am sure that they were threats against her life.

72. Rosemary talked about the Hamill case and told us in great detail about how the RUC was very stand-offish in relation to Hamill; in reminding us of all this, she pointed out that nothing had been done to stop his murder. It was a very important point and it blew people away. It was especially important for us as organisers of the tour, because it may well have been the case that we found ourselves in similar situations and it was of concern to note that if there was any trouble (and if the troublemakers came from certain communities), we may not get any help from the authorities. This was of great concern when we had the safety of prominent politicians in our hands.
73. The talk from Rosemary was organised by the GRRC. They also brought Robert Hamill's sister to talk to us. There was a clear message being sent- "this is what happens when you stand up for yourself".
74. There may well have been a note of that meeting. I think it was around the time of 12 July, which was one of the main days for marching. The marching season starts some time towards the end of March and ends well into August. It is said that there are around 3000 marches during that season. Each community and group within that community has its own set of marches. Around 86% of the marches take place in their own areas and people enjoy them, cheer them on, then go home and relax. It is the minority that cause the difficulties.
75. There was a genuine concern amongst the delegation that something would happen to Rosemary, but she was relaxed about the level of that threat to her. There was a feeling amongst us that generally security ought to be tightened up and that we all ought to pay closer attention since something could have happened to us.

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76. Alan McConnell (Head of the Friends of Sinn Fein today and involved in the Information for Ireland Committee at the time) was also present at the meeting on or around the 12th July, as was Cindy Wasser, currently a Judge in Ontario. Cindy had a fair amount of contact with Rosemary and was very big in the Bar Association in Canada. I know that Rosemary was taken care of by Cindy on a number of occasions and that if she wanted a lawyer to work with her, then she would contact Cindy. Cindy was also part of the Information on Ireland Campaign.
77. I am now on the board of a group called Friends of Sinn Fein; we are a fund raising arm of Sinn Fein and work in support of the peace process. I am the only one from Québec who is in that organisation. We actually have very solid orders from Sinn Fein; we are to do nothing more than fund raising. There is to be no whiff of scandal and we are a purely political lobbying/fund raising group. I am on the Board of Directors.
78. I have been involved in the group for roughly four to five years. My wife died of breast cancer around three years ago and it has been very hard for me to come back to Ireland since she passed away. We worked together for the Coalition and although she was a Protestant from Belfast, she shared my views of the situation. Our marriage did cause a rift in her family.
79. It takes courage to stand up and be one of the people who is "known" for getting involved. Rosemary was one of these people. When you are "known", every time you are stopped by the UDR at a checkpoint, you never know whether something is going to happen to you because your name has been circulated for some reason.
80. As I understand it, Rosemary was one of those people who consistently defended whoever asked for help. It may have been that by virtue of acting for the Hamills and the like, it sets you up for trouble. I have heard that from a lot of people. Standing up against stuff like that puts you in the line of fire. People's perception of Rosemary was that she was a very good solicitor; I never really heard anything critical of her in that capacity and her death was a tragedy.

81. I remember Father [REDACTED] organised a conference (I cannot remember when) at the Europa Hotel in Belfast which was aimed at people across the community. Alan McConnell and I attended as Canadian representatives. There were all kinds of people there from all kinds of groups spanning the entire community. It was amazing for those people to all get together and stand in the Europa Hotel at one time. People were trying to build a confidence across the divide. Sadly, unlike Rosemary people still keep their heads down and fear getting involved in the peace process because of the threat of reprisal from hardcore Republicans or Loyalists.

82. I have been shown a statement I made on 11 July 1997 (RNI 303.252-253

[REDACTED]. I can confirm that the contents of that statement are true.

Statement of Truth

I believe that the facts stated in this witness statement are true.

Signed:

Georges Beriault
Georges Beriault

Dated:

Nov. 9TH, 2007