

MEMO : TO COUNCIL
 FROM : G. T. FAULKNER
 DATE : JULY 31ST, 1992.
 RE : CHILD MIGRANT UPDATE

370

4.15

CHILD MIGRANT CONTROVERSY - 31ST JULY, 1992.

MEETING: VOICES : Gordon Grant (President), Bruce Blythe, Mr. Jones (John).
 C.B.'s : Gerry Faulkner, Peter McGowan (Phillips Fox)

9:30 - 11:05 a.m. Board Room 459 Hay Street.

The meeting actually began at 9:50 due to late arrival of Grant and Blythe - very brief apology.

Preamble:

It's very difficult to write an orderly report of a very disorderly meeting! Points are not necessarily in chronological order.

1. Both Blythe and Jones objected to
 - i) the short notice
 - ii) the presence of a lawyer

Re i) I made it clear that the timing was proposed by President of VOICES - "so don't blame me!"

ii) Gordon's letter of last week (quoted) invited me to bring a lawyer - and even suggested Phillips Fox.
2. There was clearly confusion or at least lack of communication in VOICES group; Blythe and Jones came with an Agenda different from Grant.
3. Blythe and Jones (not sure of Grant) demand a 'Public Enquiry'. They claim our common ground is "desire for truth". McGowan pushed them on
 - i) Public enquiry for what purpose? Only 'truth'?
They said: "let's see where it leads."
 - ii) People (individuals) involved already know their "truth"; what more is an enquiry going to do?
 - iii) Grant's letter saying too many people would be hurt by an enquiry. So what about respect for privacy of individuals?
I cited phone-calls to me saying: "Please tell 'them' (media, VOICES etc.) to leave us alone."
4. McGowan also made the point that legal avenues are open to individuals who wish to pursue such a direction, so why a "public enquiry" which would necessarily further damage already hurt people?
5. Early in the meeting, Blythe said: "We are pressing for a public enquiry..." So I said (very seriously): "Excuse me, but who is WE?" He didn't take kindly to that, but I insisted, saying that we were getting mixed messages from VOICES.
Grant then said his letters were his "personal opinion".
6. Blythe and Jones pushed me to agree to a Public Enquiry. I refused to make an on-spot decision on a matter which was not even on the Agenda. I agreed to "consider your request to push for the holding of a Government enquiry."
7. I itemised the assistance to former Child Migrants that C.B.'s are/have been involved in.

: 2 :

8. Grant gave a long and very angry account of his recent (i.e. 10-15) years since leaving the army; blames it all on Bindoon (that's what his Counsellor says) and also volunteered graphic accounts of other people's sufferings.
I did not respond.
Blythe claims to have received "over 200 phone calls".
9. Grant asked me REDACTED
- i) if I knew REDACTED? I said: "No, I've never met him but I know of him."
 - ii) if it was true the C.B.'s were making a film, or is it not true what Sheilagh Pearce says? I said: "I don't know what Sheilagh Pearce says, but I can state very clearly that the C.B.'s are not making a film!"
10. It was now near 11:00, so I suggested that the question of Alex McDonald SJ might be part of our next agenda.
11. Jones wanted another meeting within a few days. I refused. So we settled for "about a month's time", preferably on a Saturday morning - Grant and I to arrange.
12. At the end, Grant said: "No more use of media" and Blythe said: "We must use the media:"!

CONCLUSIONS:

It is clear

- i) that Blythe is calling the shots
- ii) the they (Grant?) want a Public Enquiry
- iii) that they want C.B.'s publicly to support that move
- iv) that they want C.B.'s to "foot the bill" for "urgent independent (i.e. non-church) counselling services"
- v) that they blame current ills of orphans/former child migrants on the Christian Brothers
- vi) that they are determined to rid Keane's name and statue from Bindoon.

Peter McGowan and I to meet within a week or so.

G. T. Faulkner
July 31st 1992.