

DPS/Secretary of State

**SUPPER WITH LORD CULLEN - BUTE HOUSE, THURSDAY 21 MARCH**

1. I have arranged caterers for the Secretary of State's supper tomorrow evening with Lord Cullen and others. As the numbers are unlikely to exceed 6 or 7 I would not propose to prepare a seating plan: I think the Secretary of State would be more comfortable simply seating guests when they enter the Dining Room.

2. Drinks will be available in the Drawing Room at 7.30pm before dinner at 8.00pm. Because of the shortage of time I simply have asked the caterers to produce the following menu:

Smoked haddock with a white wine sauce

Fillet of pork with a spinach stuffing  
Vegetables and potatoes

Almond cake with poached plums

3. Please let me know if there is any difficulty with the menu and I should also welcome details of who will be present - so that we admit the right people and don't turn anyone away!



**HAMISH BLAIR**

MGSS  
Room 238  
SAH  
Ext 4997

20 March 1996

Susan Ross  
MGSS

**WORKING SUPPER: THURSDAY 21 MARCH, BUTE HOUSE**

Further to our telephone conversation yesterday, the number of people attending the supper tomorrow evening has now increased. Those attending the supper will be;

Secretary of State  
Lord Cullen  
Lord Advocate  
Solicitor General  
Crown Agent  
Solicitor  
Mr Hamill  
Mr Essery  
Michael Lugton

At the moment, the supper is due to start at 7.30pm although this is likely to change to 9.00pm and as soon as I have confirmation I will telephone you.

Please contact me if you require any further information.

CRAIG CLIFFORD  
Diary Secretary  
Ext 6735

20 March 1996

Mr Hamill

Copy to: PS/Minister of State  
Mrs Flockhart  
Mr Maxwell  
PS/US of S  
Solicitor  
Director, InD  
Mrs J Low

## DUNBLANE: CULLEN INQUIRY

The Secretary of State was grateful for your support at the dinner in Bute House last night for Lord Cullen, coming as it did at the end of a long and demanding day. The others present were the Law Officers, the Solicitor and the Crown Agent.

The discussion was of a general nature, but it may be of assistance if I set out below my understanding of the main points with implications for the way in which the inquiry is to be undertaken.

1. It was noted that, at the Home Secretary's request, the terms of reference had been amended at a late stage to refer to interim as well as final recommendations. Lord Cullen said that he was not sure that he would take up the opportunity to make interim recommendations, not least because he feared that the process of formulating such recommendations could delay the conclusion of the inquiry. The Secretary of State indicated that this was a matter for Lord Cullen himself.

2. The application of the Contempt of Court Act 1981 was noted. Lord Cullen's view was that, if contempt occurred, he would make a complaint to the Court of Session, which would enquire into the matter. There was reference to reports that a journalist had attempted to break into the mortuary where some of the children's bodies were stored, and the Secretary of State wondered whether this should be the subject of a formal complaint to the Press Complaints Commission. It would be helpful if you could let me have details and advice for the Secretary of State on this.

3. Lord Cullen expected that he would have a series of meetings with officials so that he could brief himself, and so that housekeeping issues could be attended to. The Secretary of State emphasised that the Government wished to provide Lord Cullen with all necessary support. Lord Cullen said that he would find it helpful to be kept in touch with developments in Government thinking on relevant issues and he hoped that it would be possible to have regular meetings on policy issues. Ministers saw no difficulty with that.

4. The Secretary of State indicated that he had kept copies of his correspondence as constituency MP with Thomas Hamilton during the course of the Parliament from 1987 to 1992 but that he destroyed earlier correspondence. The Lord Advocate advised that all relevant evidence should be made available to the Crown Office by the Procurator Fiscal. The Secretary of State noted that the correspondence from Hamilton referred to conversations with Scottish Office officials, and this pointed to the need for all Mr Hamilton's recorded contacts with The Scottish Office to be made available to the inquiry. You indicated that the gathering of the relevant material was already in hand. The Lord Advocate reported that a newspaper advertisement would be appearing today inviting interested parties to submit all relevant material to the Procurator Fiscal.

5. The Secretary of State, noting the wide geographical spread of Hamilton's boys club activities, considered that there was an issue to be examined about the sharing of information between authorities. He himself had not been aware of the extent of Hamilton's interests. The Secretary of State also expressed the view that public interest would be focused, during the inquiry, on why the tragedy had occurred, and who could be held to blame. In relation to the first question, Lord Cullen referred to the problem of getting into an individual's mind, but he thought that it might be possible to draw on the assistance of a psychologist or a psychiatrist, probably towards the end of the inquiry.

6. On the location of the inquiry, Lord Cullen indicated that the Albert Halls in Stirling were being contemplated. The Secretary of State suggested that the District Council building in Stirling should also be considered, as it was expected to be redundant after 1 April. Lord Cullen indicated that he would look at that possibility.

7. The Secretary of State saw an important UK dimension to the inquiry. The Scottish Office was clearly the lead department in relation to this matter, and a rapid, clearly focused inquiry leading to practical recommendations which the Government could implement, with all-Party agreement, without delay would demonstrate that the procedures for dealing with issues of major public concern and policy in Scotland functioned well.

8. Lord Cullen indicated that he intended to read up on changes in the law, particularly in the area of firearms control, and on proposals for change which had not been implemented. The Secretary of State said that the Home Secretary had set a deadline of the end of April for the preparation and submission of the Government's written evidence, and he suggested that this was very tight and might be difficult to meet. Lord Cullen noted the position.

9. Lord Cullen thought that there should be opportunities for interested parties, including representatives of the firearms lobby, to make written representations. He would, however, aim to keep the numbers giving oral evidence under strict control.

RESTRICTED - INQUIRY

10. Lord Cullen indicated that he might at some stage wish to come to see the Secretary of State, and the Secretary of State indicated that he would be very glad to see Lord Cullen at any stage. At the same time, he emphasised the importance of the Government being seen to be acting entirely properly in relation to the inquiry, which was of course intended to be both impartial and comprehensive.

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PP

C M A LUGTON  
PS/Secretary of State  
22 March 1996