



26/10/2015

Mr Will Danaher,
Secretary NASRPC.

Dear Mr Danaher,

I refer to your email of Saturday last, the 24th inst., and your previous letter dated the 16th which was emailed to me on the 20th.

In both communications you pose a number of questions and you make and/or imply various statements which I have to say are seriously at odds with the facts. I will attempt to deal with the various matters individually:

Background:

At the very first meeting of the Sports Coalition a number of fundamental matters were discussed and agreed by the new members among which were that:

- a) in addition to Chairing the Coalition, I would be its sole spokesperson;
- b) that we would stay strongly united with no one doing "solo runs"
and
- c) that we would campaign to address only the proposals/recommendations as had been published in the Joint Report of the Department of Justice and Equality and An Garda Siochana.

At that first meeting, the NASRPC introduced a wish for the Coalition to include in its campaign proposals for the introduction of an “apprenticeship” scheme for new applicants acquiring centre fire handguns. This was not agreed as every other member felt it would not be supported by either the public or politicians and that it would simply serve to undermine our main focus which was addressing the implications of the report just published. The NASRPC accepted the view of everyone else and it was thus agreed unanimously that this was not an issue to be pursued by the Coalition.

In the months which followed the Sports Coalition met on many occasions to discuss progress of the campaign and to agree actions/strategy as new phases and revelations surfaced. During those early months several people openly declared their political affiliations and political friendships and they used them in consultation with our committee and me to further the interests of the Coalition.

However, it became known to me and others that someone was sitting at our table from NASRPC who had not been as open with us as they should and furthermore that they had conducted meetings and contacts with the Minister and other political contacts behind our backs. That individual, with the knowledge and support of the NASRPC Chairman was Mark Maguire who we discovered is a member of Fine Gael in the Minister’s constituency. While we are aware he has denied he is a member of Fine Gael, he nonetheless continues to be listed on the membership register. He clearly is well connected with the party machine in the Minister’s constituency and maintains close contacts the Minister’s advisors. None of this was declared to the Coalition. We also became aware that the nature of these clandestine meetings/contacts included, among other things, the aforementioned “apprenticeship” scheme. It is significant that none of these contacts were reported at any meetings of the Coalition. It is also the case, as we have since discovered, that the political establishment was under the impression that these contacts were supported by the Coalition.

Not surprisingly, an issue of trust/distrust of NASRPC arose immediately for the other members of the Coalition. It was immediately recalled by some that a controversy had also arisen involving both gentlemen when Mr Maguire inexplicably received an invitation, despite not being a representative of any organisation, to the meeting between all the stakeholder organisations and the Minister for Justice and Garda commissioner. Neither Mr Tope nor Mr Maguire had sought an invitation for Mr Maguire and were at a loss as to how or why Mr Maguire was invited at the last minute. At least that is what they insisted. I have to say that not many people were convinced as it was clear the Minister and her political advisor knew him well.

Turning now to your letter of October 16th, I reply to the questions posed in the same order as they appear in your correspondence:

- 1. Since the NASRPC is the second largest shooting organisation of the sports coalition, why did the NASRPC organisation not get any representative on the FCP?**

It should be blindingly obvious that the issue of the NASRPC's meetings behind the backs of the Coalition members created a major obstacle for all other members at a time when the NASRPC had failed to address those concerns despite being on notice that they were to be discussed a meeting. The question is in any event now moot as the NASRPC has resigned from the Sports Coalition.

- 2. In terms of the process for the nominations for the FCP, what procedure was used by the sports coalition to nominate these people for the FCP?**

Names were submitted by me and an explanation why I chose the particular people was given. Members were invited to give an opinion or to dissent. There were no dissenters. The proposal was agreed unanimously. The question is in any event now moot as the NASRPC has resigned from the Sports Coalition.

- 3. On the basis that the representative of the NASRPC, (Chairman Michael Tope) was unable to attend the meeting convened, why did the sports coalition go ahead with a nomination process without representation of the second largest shooting organisation of the coalition being present?**

Attendance by every member is not a pre-requisite for decisions. In any democratic body a majority suffices. It was also a meeting convened having had to cancel it previously due to a number of people not being able to attend which would have meant that a majority would be absent. I find the question somewhat hypocritical as the NASRPC were quite happy to participate at previous meetings and take decisions where not everyone was in attendance. The question is in any event now moot as the NASRPC has resigned from the Sports Coalition.

- 4. Communications between the sports coalition and the NASRPC representatives have been unsatisfactory for some time, in so far as communications have been through a third party. Why has this been the case?**

The responsibility for this rests entirely with your own representatives, none of whom have made any contact with me since before the Minister's announcement of 18th of September. However, you are quite right that contact has, since then, been through a third party. However, the third party contact has on each and every occasion without exception been initiated by Michael Tope. I have never at any time engaged a third party to communicate with anyone, including the NASRPC nor its representatives. Might I remind you that only last Saturday, I was again contacted by a third party at the request, yet again, of Mick Tope to deliver to me an ultimatum to the effect that if NASRPC did not get a seat at the FCP through the Sports

Coalition, it would resign from the Coalition. The naivety of this was stunning set against the background where the NASRPC had acted behind the backs of the Coalition members to our detriment and leaving behind the impression it was with our support/approval and had failed to attend any meeting to account for their actions, and then sought fit to issue an ultimatum!!! I regarded this as a ham-fisted attempt at blackmail which could elicit only one possible response – there would be no seat through the Coalition while this matter remained outstanding and the ultimatum only served to entrench positions deeper making matters far worse. The question is in any event now moot as the NASRPC has resigned from the Sports Coalition.

- 5. *The selection process for nominated people for the FCP was not on the agenda for the meeting of the sports coalition unattended by the NASRPC representative, but it went ahead without the active participation of the WA1500 delegate or the NASRPC delegate on the night. Can you explain this process and the thinking behind it please?***

You (NASRPC) already received the draft of the Minutes of the meeting in question wherein it is recorded that the invitation from the DOJ had arrived only that afternoon. It was naturally brought to the table at the meeting scheduled for that night. NASRPC seem to have a difficulty understanding and it is assuming matters which have no bearing on the selection process. Presence at the meeting was never going to be a deciding qualification for who does or does not represent the Coalition at the FCP. Where on earth did was this determined? The fact that WA1500 received a seat is proof positive that it was not a qualification. Please see also my responses to points 1,2 & 3 for further elaboration. As the Coalition is a democratic organisation which makes its decisions by majority, no one could presume to be “entitled” to a seat as would appear to be the presumption of NASRPC. The question is in any event now moot as the NASRPC has resigned from the Sports Coalition.

Turning to your email of last Saturday, October 24th in which you gave notice of the NASRPC’s decision that it had resigned from the Sports Coalition, I wish to respond to the reasons which the NASRPC say gave rise to that decision:

- ***The lack of objectivity and transparency of the selection process for representation on the FCP.***

There was no lack of transparency and quite frankly it is a silly statement for someone to make who was not at the meeting where the decision was taken. I can again only suggest that you refer to your draft minutes of that meeting and my responses to points 1, 2 & 3 above.

- ***The ratification of the Sports Coalition representatives for the FCP without the approval of all coalition members.***

You are wrong again. It was never a protocol that all members have to be present for decisions to be taken. Once again, please refer in particular to my response to point 3 above.

- ***The failure to notify the NASRPC of the agenda item for the meeting on Monday the 5th of October; that was the selection of the Sports coalition representatives for the FCP.***

Please see my response to point 5 above. The invitation arrived only in the afternoon of the meeting and was brought to the table immediately.

- ***Our disappointment at the lack of our direct representation on the Firearms Consultative Panel through the Sports coalition.***

Please see my response to point 5 above. The NASRPC cannot be seriously suggesting some entitlement to a seat set against the background of not only the unresolved nature of the issues between us, but the failure to make any attempt to contact the Coalition to explain/resolve/account for matters which were obviously urgent in the knowledge that invitations from the DOJ for the FCP were imminent. There are simply no grounds for disappointment as the NASRPC Chairman was at all times on notice of the issues which had to be resolved and he must have known that the cohesion of the Coalition demanded that he deal with the matters as soon as possible. He did not even make so much as a holding phone call to me. As I have said already, I had no contact from anyone in the NASRPC since before the Minister's announcement.

- ***Lack of direct communication and consultation on the selection process for the FCP sports coalition representatives.***

The matter of direct communication (or lack of it) is one which NASRPC will have to address with its own people who are the only ones who engaged third parties to communicate. The NASRPC would appear to be either in denial or oblivious to the obstacle to their getting a seat on the FCP through the Sports Coalition and their failure to deal with that matter. For the avoidance of doubt, the "elephant in the room" is the issue of trust. They have instead tried to cast themselves as the injured party when in fact it is the Sports Coalition members who are the injured parties. See my previous response at point 4 above.

- ***Communication from the Sports coalition legal representative threatening to summons a member of the NASRPC committee and the Minister for Justice to court.***

This is in fact defamatory. It is both malicious and it is false in what it implies. The facts are, the two people mentioned, as I understand it, were notified by William Egan, solicitor, of his intention to issue summonses to them both as witnesses in other cases – not a threat of legal proceedings against them as is implied.

Contrary to what is further implied, this has nothing whatsoever to do with the Sports Coalition which is a stranger to this matter. The Sports Coalition has not, contrary to what is implied in this statement, ever at any time given instructions of any nature to any firm of solicitors in any matter. The first I learned of this matter was a phone call from Gerry McCarthy in early September while I was on holiday abroad. I received a further phone call later the same day from William Egan who informed me of what he had done on behalf of a number of clients, who were instructing him privately, as he believed I would inevitably get calls about the matter. Furthermore, William Egan was only appointed as the Coalition's legal representative at the Coalition's meeting of October 5th and that fact is recorded in those minutes – minutes which were in the possession of the NASRPC when you drafted your letter. The circumstances and non involvement of the Coalition is further detailed in those minutes. This point made by you clearly implies involvement in this matter by the Coalition, when it clearly it had no involvement of any kind. Why else would you assert it is one of the NASRPC's reasons for resigning from the Sports Coalition?

The NASRPC clearly has problems, none of which are of the making of the Sports Coalition nor any of its members. Communications and Trust would seem to be paramount.

Finally, I am now hearing that Mark Maguire is seeking a seat on the FCP via the nomination of Countryside Alliance Ireland. But I expect you already knew that long before writing to me.

Yours faithfully,

Desmond Crofton,
Chairman,
Sports Coalition