

FROM: MRS K Maddieson, IPL Division
10 March 1998

Ms Bharucha
Mrs Halliday
Central Secretariat-O
(* w/o attachments)

MRS BROWN - O
MRS SEAR - O
MRS SMILEY - O
MR TRAVIS - O
MISS HUSSAIN - O
MR KEERS - O

NORTHERN IRELAND : " BULL POINTS "

I attach a copy of the Northern Ireland section of the FCO's latest "Bull Points" document for updating.

2. The FCO circulate this document to posts abroad where its main purpose is to supply Information Officers with an up-to-date quarry for speeches and answers to letters on which they can draw.

3. I should be grateful if Mrs Halliday could co-ordinate Northern Ireland Department responses. I would appreciate any comments/amendments you might have on the attached by noon Friday 20 March 1998.

signed

Kay maddieson
IPL Division

GTN 210 6585
10 March 1998

The Balcombe Street Four

Following careful consideration of all the facts and the representations made on behalf of Joseph O'Connell in December 1997, whole life tariffs have been set for these four mandatory life sentence prisoners. The decision and reasons for them were disclosed to the men on 30 January.

FAIR EMPLOYMENT

Government is totally committed to the elimination of all forms of unlawful discrimination in employment in Northern Ireland. To this end it introduced the Fair Employment (NI) Act 1989, the most radical piece of anti-discrimination legislation ever passed in the United Kingdom, and probably Europe. Its main features are:

- Establishment of Fair Employment Commission (FEC) and Fair Employment Tribunal.
- Outlawing of indirect discrimination (direct discrimination unlawful since 1976).
- Compulsory registration of employers with the Commission.
- Compulsory monitoring of work-forces and applicants.
- Compulsory reviews of recruitment, training and promotion practices, at least once every three years.
- Affirmative action, with goals and timetables as directed by the FEC.
- Criminal penalties and economic sanctions to punish bad practice including loss of government grants and contracts.
- Unlimited compensation for victims of discrimination.
- Code of Practice on fair employment.

Progress

- The act is working well. Almost 4,000 organizations representing approximately 70% of those in employment are registered with the Commission and all those required to submit monitoring returns have done so.
- Many larger employers have introduced voluntary affirmative action measures.
- Figures show that Roman Catholics account for 38.1% of the workforce (from 34.9% in 1990) compared with approximately 40% in the economically active population.
- The Fair Employment Tribunal offers real redress for victims of discrimination and has made a number of substantial compensation awards.

Employment Equality Review

- A wide ranging, independent review of the effectiveness of the legislation as well as related social and economic measures, has been taken forward by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR). This has involved extensive research and consultation with interested parties. The Review Report was published on 26 June 1997 and makes a number of recommendations covering a wide area of Government activity. The Governments consideration of the recommendations is well advanced and a response to the full range of SACHR'S proposals will be given in a paper to be published in early 1998.

INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND (IFI)

- Established in 1986 by the British and Irish Governments in the wake of the Anglo Irish Agreement. Administered by an independent Board, comprising a Chairman and 6 other Members jointly appointed by the 2 Governments.
- Fund's geographical remit covers the 6 counties of Northern Ireland and the 6 Southern border counties of Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim and Louth. The Fund is required to spend approximately 75% of its resources in Northern Ireland.
- Board is supported by a Secretariat staffed by officials seconded by the two Governments and headed by Joint Directors General based in Belfast and Dublin respectively.
- To date the donors to the Fund include the US (US\$307m), the EC (ECU167m), Canada (up to C\$4.1m) and New Zealand (NZ\$900,000). Australia has agreed to contribute A\$7m over a 5 year period which commenced in 1995.
- Up to 30 September 1997 the Fund approved assistance of some £340m to over 3,600 projects and had contributed to the generation of approximately 29,000 jobs - including part-time and construction jobs.
- The Fund has a particular interest in supporting projects with a cross-border dimension
- Has also supported five major flagship projects because of the impact they will have on the economic regeneration of their region: the construction of the Erne-Shannon waterway; the development of the Navan Fort visitor centre; the economic regeneration of the Strabane/Lifford area; pump-priming support for the proposed new University campus at Springvale in West Belfast; and the development of the St Patricks visitors centre Downpatrick.
- Very successful in leveraging public and private sector investments, particularly in the Urban Development and Tourism Programmes where the overall leverage factor averages 1:3. The Tourism Programme has played a key role in stimulating very substantial private investment in some of the most disadvantaged areas, North and South, where the tourism industry offers the greatest potential for economic activity and job creation. It is estimated that to date this Programme has helped to generate over 2,500 direct jobs.

EQUALITY AND EQUITY

Targeting Social Need (TSN)

- Economic and social disadvantage persist on both sides of the Northern Ireland community. On all major indicators however, e.g. unemployment, income, health, overcrowding - Catholics generally do worse than Protestants.
- These different experiences sustain feelings of discrimination and alienation which in turn influence attitudes to political and security issues.
- The Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, SACHR'S Report on Employment equality, published in June 1997 includes a chapter on TSN. There are clear linkages between action to tackle social exclusion in Northern Ireland and the TSN initiative. In welcoming the new Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) in England, launched by the Prime Minister in December, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland said of the SEU that she would decide the most appropriate response in Northern Ireland to the work in light of the Government's response to the Commission's recommendations which is due to be published early in 1998.

Race Relations

- The Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 came into operation in two phases. The first on 30 June 1997, along with certain technical matters established the commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland and enable it to make arrangements for the exercise of its functions. All remaining provisions of the Order came into force on 4 August 1997.
- The legislation is along the general lines of the Great Britain Race Relations Act 1976, and refers to the traditional Irish traveller community.

Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT)

- Revised Government Guidelines on Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) came into effect for all Northern Ireland Departments, their Agencies and the Northern Ireland Office, on 1 January 1994.
- The Guidelines aim to ensure that those responsible for the development of policy and delivery of services do not unfairly or unnecessarily discriminate against specified sections of the community.
- Groups which may be covered by the guidelines include people of different gender, age, ethnic group, religious belief or political opinion; married and unmarried people; disabled and non-disabled people; people with or without dependents and people of differing sexual orientation.
- Reports on the implementation of PAFT by Departments and related Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) and agencies are published annually. The report covering calendar year 1996, was published in April 1997.

MacBride

The MacBride Principles are considered unnecessary because the concerns they address are already covered by the more wide ranging precise and stringent requirements of the Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989.

- The Fair Employment laws are working well, what Northern Ireland needs is more job creating investment which will help achieve fair employment for both communities.

EDUCATION

- The Government believes that education has a role to play in the process of improving community relations among young people. To this end a number of measures, for which £3.5m has been allocated in the current financial year, are available;
- responsibility for the administration of the Cross Community Contact Scheme was devolved to the Education and Library Boards in September 1996 and re- launched in 1997 as the "Schools Community Relations Programme." It provides modest grant support to schools, colleges and youth groups to develop joint, collaborative programme involving young people from different backgrounds, nearly 700 schools (about 50% of NI schools) and over 500 youth groups are actively involved;
- the Cultural Traditions programme, introduced in May 1989, seeks to provide opportunities through which young people can explore both their shared cultural heritage and the rich diversity of cultural traditions;
- support is provided to voluntary sector reconciliation organisations, museums, arts and cultural organisations and a range of other bodies for the development of programmes and projects designed to enhance and complement the opportunities provided through the formal education structures. EC funding is providing further assistance in developing the range of youth and education community/reconciliation related projects;
- the Statutory Northern Ireland Curriculum includes the 2 Educational cross-curricular themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage and pupils in compulsory education at all schools must be afforded opportunities, through appropriate programmes of study, to learn about themselves and others, to understand and respect differences and to appreciate the benefits of resolving conflict by peaceful means.

Integrated Education

- Integrated education provides an opportunity for children from different religious, cultural and social backgrounds to develop a knowledge, understanding, respect and appreciation of their common cultures, as well as of the two main traditions of Northern Ireland.

When the 1989 Education Reform Order became law, there were just 10 integrated schools in NI, with a combined enrollment of 1,788 pupils. Today there are 33 Grant-Aided schools (including 11 secondary schools), widely distributed throughout the Province, with a total enrollment of over 7,500 (this is around 2% of total pupil numbers). Growth has been steady at the rate of 2 or 3 new schools a year;

- Approval has also been given to 3 existing primary schools, and 3 secondary schools transform to integrated status, and to grant-aided integrated status to be given to an Independent Integrated College (subject to conditions) with effect from 1 September 1998.

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC)

- The CRC was established in 1990 to promote community relations work in Northern Ireland. It has a budget in 1997/98 of nearly £2.5m and the Council has its own grant making capacity. Its members (up to 24) represent a broad spectrum of community interests.

District Council Community Relations Programme

- The Government provides grant aid for programmes which command cross-political support and encourage cross-community contact, mutual understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.

Community Reconciliation Bodies

- Core-funding is provided to support bodies which promote cross-community contact and the creation of a more tolerant and harmonious community. The work of such bodies is an important means of harnessing community energies and promoting a more tolerant society;

Cultural Traditions Programme

- This programme aims to encourage greater understanding about different cultures and traditions in Northern Ireland. It includes support for the Irish Language.

Irish Language

- The Government's policy in respect of the Irish language reflects the 1991 Census findings that 142,000 people had some degree of ability in the language.
- Some £3m was spent on projects with an Irish language dimension in 1996/97. The Government provides grant aid to 7 primary schools and a secondary school where Irish is the medium of instruction.
- The Ultach Trust was set up in 1989 to widen the Irish language's contribution to NI cultural heritage and increase knowledge of the language.