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'No rush to judgment' on plans urge Martin and Woodward

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DEAGLÁN De BRÉADÚN, DAN KEENAN PATSY McGARRY and

REACTION TO REPORT: THERE SHOULD be no “rush to judgment” on the report of the Consultative Group on the Past, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin and Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward said yesterday.

Speaking after a meeting with Mr Martin in Dublin, the NI Secretary acknowledged the recognition payment scheme had “aroused huge controversy” but said it was just one proposal. “We’ve all got to read that report . . . before we start making any judgments about costs or specific proposals.”

Asked if Dublin would contribute to the cost of implementing the report, Mr Martin said: “I can’t unilaterally declare on behalf of Government but we will bring the report before Government.”

Speaking in Belfast, Sinn Féin president Gerry Adams commended the report’s authors but said the proposed legacy commission “appointed by the British government” was “not the independent and international commission, established by a reputable international body like the UN, that Sinn Féin believes is necessary”.

SDLP Assembly member Alex Attwood said his party would judge the report on how it dealt with the past and whether it allowed society to move forward on an ethical basis. There should still be a public inquiry into the killing of Pat Finucane, he said.

Ulster Unionist leader Sir Reg Empey said the failure to distinguish between paramilitaries and victims undermined the other proposals, and had created immense hurt and outrage across society.

Alliance Party leader David Ford said it was another stage in a long process of reconciliation.

The report was described as "a defining moment" by the Bishop of Clogher, Dr Michael Jackson, on behalf of the Church of Ireland. The Presbyterian Church, in an initial response, said the recommendations were "far-reaching and at times challenging".

Speaking on Tuesday, DUP leader and First Minister Peter Robinson said: "There can be no equivalence between those who went out with the clear intention of murdering and those... who were slaughtered as they went about their daily business."

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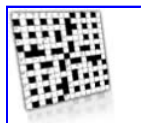
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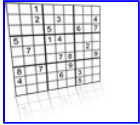
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