

## NATIONAL ARCHIVES

### IRELAND



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MR. ~~McIVOR~~  
Blair

STATEMENT ON MIXED SCHOOLING TO BE MADE TO ASSEMBLY THIS AFTERNOON (APRIL 30) AFTER QUESTIONS BY MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MR BASIL MCIVOR:-----

I WISH TO PUT TO THE ASSEMBLY A SUGGESTION TO FACILITATE THE PROVISION OF SCHOOLS CATERING FOR CHILDREN OF DIFFERENT DENOMINATIONS. *Have you a copy?*

FIRST, I MUST DECLARE MY BASIC BELIEF THAT THE MIXING OF SCHOOL-CHILDREN WOULD CONTRIBUTE TO THE REDUCTION OF COMMUNITY TENSION IN NORTHERN IRELAND. *Link 30-4-74*

ALTHOUGH I REALISE THAT THE CHURCHES HAVE SOME HESITATION ABOUT MIXED SCHOOLING, I ASK THEM EARNESTLY TO CONSIDER THE VERY SPECIAL NEEDS OF NORTHERN IRELAND AND TO JOIN WITH A POWER-SHARING EXECUTIVE IN A CONSTRUCTIVE APPROACH TO MEETING THESE NEEDS, AND OF COURSE AS MINISTER OF EDUCATION, MUST DO EVERYTHING THAT I CAN TO HELP. *Yes thanks*

CHURCHES.

ONE OF THE GROUNDS FOR THE HESITATION OF THE CHILDREN IS AN UNDERSTABLE ANXIETY ABOUT THE RELIGIOUS UPBRINGING OF THEIR CHILDREN IN SCHOOLS NOT UNDER THEIR OWN MANAGEMENT. THE MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS IS, HOWEVER, A MATTER THAT WE IN THE ASSEMBLY CAN DO SOMETHING ABOUT.

UNDER THE PRESENT LAW, 50 PER CENT OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE OF (STATE) CONTROLLED PRIMARY AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS ARE REPRESENTATIVES OF "TRANSFERORS". SINCE IN THE PAST IT WAS THE PROTESTANT CHURCHES THAT TRANSFERRED THEIR SCHOOLS, THE DE FACTO POSITION IS THAT THESE SCHOOLS HAVE 50 PER CENT PROTESTANT CHURCH MANAGEMENT. THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE PAST OPTED NOT TO TRANSFER ITS SCHOOLS, WITH THE RESULT THAT NOW MOST ROMAN CATHOLIC PRIMARY AND INTERMEDIATE SCHOOLS ARE "MAINTAINED" SCHOOLS, THIS GIVES THEM TWO-THIRDS MEMBERSHIP OF THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE, FREEDOM OVER THE APPOINTMENT OF STAFF, AND PAYMENT FROM PUBLIC FUNDS OF ALL CAPITAL AND RUNNING COSTS, EXCEPT 20 PER CENT OF NEW CAPITAL EXPENDITURE.

HENCE, THE POPULAR CONCEPTION OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S HAVING "TWO SYSTEMS" OF SCHOOLS: STATE SCHOOLS FOR PROTESTANTS, AND MAINTAINED SCHOOLS FOR CATHOLICS.

ONE SUGGESTION THAT I THINK WE COULD CONSIDER IS THE POSSIBILITY OF CHANGING THE LAW TO FACILITATE ANOTHER CLASS OF SCHOOL, WHICH WE MIGHT THINK OF AS THE SHARED SCHOOL AND IN WHICH THE TWO GROUPS OF CHURCHES WOULD BE EQUALLY INVOLVED IN MANAGEMENT.

OBVIOUSLY THE DETAILS OF THIS SUGGESTION WILL HAVE TO BE CAREFULLY WORKED OUT IN CONSULTATION WITH INTERESTED PARTIES BEFORE PRACTICAL PROPOSALS FOR LEGISLATION CAN BE FORMULATED. I APPROACH THESE AT THIS STAGE WITH A VERY OPEN MIND AND

I SHALL WISH TO OBTAIN THE VIEWS AND ASSISTANCE OF THE TWO GROUPS OF CHURCHES, THE AREA BOARDS AND OTHER INTERESTED BODIES, ESPECIALLY THE TEACHERS' ASSOCIATIONS AND THE BODIES REPRESENTATIVE OF PARENTS.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE BEHIND THE SUGGESTION IS A TRUST BY THE EXECUTIVE THAT, IF THE MAIN GROUPS OF CHURCHES ARE INVOLVED TOGETHER IN THE MANAGEMENT OF A SCHOOL THEY WILL BETWEEN THEM HAVE SUFFICIENT GOODWILL TO AGREE WHAT SHOULD BE DONE, AND TO MAKE ARRANGEMENTS WHICH ENABLE THE CHILDREN WHO ARE MEMBERS OF THEIR CHURCH IN THE SCHOOL TO BE SUITABLY INSTRUCTED IN THE PARTICULAR TENETS OF THAT CHURCH.

I PROPOSE IMMEDIATELY TO SEND A COPY OF THIS STATEMENT TO THE BODIES WHO WILL BE CONCERNED WITH IT, AND TO INVITE GENERAL PUBLIC DISCUSSION. AT THE SAME TIME, I DO NOT THINK IT WILL BE SENSIBLE TO TAKE TOO LONG OVER THE CONSULTATIVE PROCESS. I THINK IT LIKELY THAT I SHALL HAVE TO BE SUGGESTING SOME TECHNICAL AMENDMENTS TO THE EDUCATION LEGISLATION IN ANY EVENT IN THE AUTUMN AND I WOULD LIKE TO AIM AT JOINING WITH THESE ANY NEW LEGISLATION THAT IS REQUIRED ON THIS MATTER."