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*a. Connelley At
1st Sec
Box*

*Done
Do 4/8*

*PA Repts
from Sect*

*Mr Donaghy
You might mention to S.
that S. Dunn told us the
original study was rushed
through at S. of S's request
JCH
29/7*

28 July, 1994

Mr Sean O hUiginn
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division
Dept of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

Dear Assistant Secretary

"PROTESTANT ALIENATION"

You will recall that I reported on 29 March, 1994 on the contents of a scoping study on Protestant Alienation commissioned by the NIO. The study in question was conducted by Seamus Dunn and Valerie Morgan of the UU. While its database was too small to be regarded as representative (40 interviews "across the Protestant community") its conclusions were depressing in the extreme in that those interviewed betrayed a level of prejudice and ignorance of the facts that was little short of staggering. At the time the study appeared, I requested that we be kept informed of any further developments arising from it.

Commissioning of Further Research

We were briefed yesterday on the proposed next steps, by Tony Canavan of the CCRU and Edgar Jardine, statistician from the PPRU. Tony McCusker of Making Belfast Work, was also present. As I indicated in my March minute, the PPRU were to give consideration to commissioning further research arising out of the scoping study. We were advised yesterday that it has now been decided to commission another, more broadly based survey. The new study, which will take approximately 18 months from next September, will be carried out by the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the UU (specifically by Valerie Morgan, Joanne Hughes and a research assistant) and will be on a much more ambitious scale, both in terms of database and of issues covered.

The new study will consider the whole gamut of alienation, with the aim of developing a conceptual analysis of the notion of alienation, both Protestant and Catholic. Roughly 160 interviews will be conducted with Protestants and Catholics and the research will have four main parts:

- (a) A review of the literature, both in an NI context and in a comparative context;
- (b) the establishment of an empirical database which will take account, interalia, of socio-economic differences together with religious class and gender factors;
- (c) the establishment of focus groups which will permit the acquisition of providing rapid reactions and enable the researchers to monitor changing views;
- (d) the carrying out of case studies which would be representative of class, religion and region within NI.

The case studies will seek to determine to what degree alienation exists, whether it is constant or changing, how widespread it is, how it is affected by Government policies and how it can be alleviated.

Some reflections on the earlier paper

Edgar Jardine offered some reflections and comments on the earlier paper. He described the study as a small scale qualitative one, consisting of 40 interviews representative of the broad Protestant community, including persons involved in education, business, the Church as well as community leaders. He acknowledged its limitations, which had determined the terms of reference envisaged for the new research. The paper had, in fact, been published by the UU several weeks ago but seemed to have received little or no publicity. Jardine identified its most disturbing findings as :

- (a) the view that Protestant communities were disadvantaged in respect of Government grants, etc,
- (b) the assertion that anything resembling a united Ireland was not an acceptable alternative to violence; and,
- (c) the view that Government statistics were politically biased and were false.

Jardine also pointed to a number of "triggers" identified in the study which had generated the views expressed and which included Direct Rule, the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the notion of a "pan Nationalist" front, the adverse international image of the Unionist community and the lack of faith in Constitutional channels. He noted finally that the study had taken place before the Joint Declaration.

Recent data from the Social Attitudes Survey

Given the smallness of the database, Jardine was unwilling to accept uncritically the findings of the scoping study and had sought to measure these findings against the latest data collected under the "Social Attitudes" survey. (This data will be used as the basis for the next Social Attitudes survey and is confidential at present.) His findings, which he illustrated with some slides, are less dramatic but, nevertheless, reveal some interesting trends. I am appending copies of the more interesting tables which he provided. They are of particular use in that they show Catholic and Protestant views and responses to similar questions. While the data speaks for itself the following points may be worth noting:

- (a) More Protestants perceive that relations between Protestants and Catholics in five years time will be worse "than now" than was the case in 1991 and 1989 (22% now, 10% in 1991 and 16% in 1989). The number of Catholics thinking the same way is less (11%) but more than in 1991 (4%). Interestingly, more Protestants also think that relations will be better than was the case in 1989.
- (b) There has been little significant change since 1981 among both communities with regard to the perceived levels of discrimination against both Catholics and Protestants.
- (c) With regard to job opportunities, the percentage of Catholics who consider that the chances of Protestants and Catholics getting a job are equal, has risen steadily from 26% in 1986 to 41% in 1993. There has been some decline in the percentage of Protestants thinking the same over the same period (68% to 59%) and some increase in Protestants who consider the chances are different (27% to 33%). Among those who rate the chances as different, there has been a steady increase in the percentage of Protestants who consider that Catholics are more likely to get a job (25% to 41%, almost a mirror image of the Catholic trend shown above), while Catholic perceptions of favouritism to Protestants continues at the very high level of the mid eighties (86%).
- (d) There has been an encouraging rise in the numbers from both communities who support rather than oppose the provision in the Fair Employment legislation requiring employers to monitor employees' religion. Among Catholics, the percentage strongly supporting this requirement has risen since 1989 from 47% to 73%, the percentage opposing has fallen from 27% to 6%. Among Protestants the percentage strongly supporting has risen from 20% to 34% and the number opposing has fallen from 49% to 33%. (While this can be interpreted in several ways, including, e.g. that Protestants are less opposed now because their perception is that the evidence will give the lie to Catholic claims of being discriminated against and could even show the converse, Jardine and Canavan both saw this trend as

encouraging; McCusker was more sceptical as was the undersigned.) (e) There continues to be strong support in both communities for Government encouragement of mixed schooling, though the percentages in both communities indicating a preference for sending children to a school of their own religion have risen since 1989 and the empirical evidence suggests that this option is the one chosen overwhelmingly by both communities.

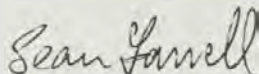
- (f) Most of the responses to queries concerning how public institutions, including the security forces and the Courts, treat each community show little change since 1989 and certainly insufficient change to draw any conclusions.

Jardine suggested that this data gave a far more nuanced picture of the degree of Protestant alienation than had the scoping study and went on to suggest that judgement be suspended on the issue pending the outcome of the newly commissioned research. I professed to being slightly less sanguine and suggested that much depended on the nature of the question asked and the political/security background at the time of asking. I wondered whether the new study would ask respondents how they voted. Jardine said they would consider this but went on to observe that certain respondents quite often gave a misleading reply to this question (i.e. DUP or Sinn Fein voters were unlikely to admit to such).

Comment

The proposed research will cost the NIO £30,000 approx. (as stated, with some reluctance, by Jardine in answer to my query). It is probably worthwhile because there is a sense in which "Protestant Alienation" has become somewhat of a flavour of the month in the past two years, with Churchmen, politicians and civil servants pointing it up to us as a new phenomenon and as the breeding ground for Protestant paramilitarism. Furthermore, the findings of the scoping study were such that some follow up was necessary to either prove or correct them. The major drawback is, of course, that the survey is one of attitudes rather than of objective data of deprivation or discrimination. We will thus have to be careful that the data which emerges is not misapplied in areas of importance such as Making Belfast Work and Targeting Social Need. More positively, the data collected from a broad based neutral project of the type signalled should prove useful in informing our priorities.

Yours sincerely



Sean Farrell