

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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MEETING WITH THE VICTIMS COMMISSION
Thursday, 9 July,1998

Mr Murray,

Below are some brief thoughts for todays meeting. The short notice precluded a more comprehensive approach.

1. INTEREST OF THE DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The main concern of the Department of Foreign Affairs is that the provisions of Articles of 11 and 12 of the Good Friday Agreement concerning victims are implemented in full.

In these Articles , the participants (undertake) to :

- to acknowledge and address the suffering of the victims of violence;
- look forward to results of the N.I Victims Commission;
- recognise the rights of victims to remember;
- achievement of a peaceful and just society would be true memorial to the victims
- recognise the particular difficulties of young people in areas affected by trouble
- will support the development of a special community -based voluntary organisations facilitating locally- based and selfhelp networks;
- allocation of sufficient resources, including statutory funding as necessary to meet the needs of victims and provide for community based support

The terms of reference of the Commission as set up state basically that they will try and meet the needs of victims in this jurisdiction. It also undertakes to consider the terms of the Agreement. However, the terms of the Agreement are binding on the participants , although to what extent they are applicable to this jurisdiction remains unclear. It can probably be assumed that by responding to the needs of victims in this jurisdiction, the Irish Government will be meeting its obligations under the agreement.

However, that some level of response by the Irish Government to the needs of victims in N.Ireland is appropriate is reflected in the Taoiseach's statement in the Dail on 14 May following the publication of the Bloomfield Report to the effect that :

- the Government is at present studying in detail the Report and its wide-ranging recommendations; in particular the need for practical assistance to be made available ;

- the Government will consult widely, including with the British Government and the new institutions to be established under the Agreement on how the Government might offer appropriate support for whatever arrangements and schemes are put in place.

- following this consideration, the Government will be making a significant financial contribution. In this regard , special consideration would be given to the proposed Trust Fund

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focussed on compensating children of victims.

Comment:

From the above, it would seem that the Government has a dual set of obligations; to victims in both parts of Ireland .

Financial obligations

The financial implications remain unclear for : a) Victims here

b) Victims in N.Ireland

c) Level of funding required

d) Source of funding.

The British Government has already allocated approx £1million £700,000 of this will go to trauma centre for victims and community groups. The remainder to be decided in consultations with support groups.

Consultations:

The NI Minister for Victims Ingram, has also set up to separate groups to advise him. Does Mr Wilson intend to a) enlarge Commission or b) set up consultation groups or consult with existing groups ?

South Africa

The Bloomfield Report remains open on the appropriateness of establishing a Truth and Reconciliation Commission on the same lines as that of S. Africa. There is also a case for considering it here very carefully, before committing ourselves to this course of action. The Irish Embassy in Pretoria should be closely involved and could also offer useful advice.

J.Betson
9.7.98

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The Victims Commission
Commission/Coimisiún: John P. Wilson, M.A.

An Coimisiún um Íospartaigh
Secretary/Rúnaí: Éamon Mulligan

Mr Dermot Gallagher
Second Secretary
Anglo Irish Division
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin 2

Mr. Murray.

Dear Dermot,

As you are probably aware, I have been asked by the Government to head the Victims Commission in conducting a review in relation to the victims of violence similar to the one carried out by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield. I enclose the terms of reference for your information.

I would like, at an early date, to meet with officials of your division to discuss some aspects of the proposed work of the Commission. I enclose a list of topics which might be touched on in these discussions.

Perhaps you would be good enough to have someone ring the Commission's secretary, Mr. Éamon Mulligan to make the arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

John P. Wilson
John P Wilson

1 July 1998

Note
Spoke to Mr Mulligan who was not sure if he wanted a meeting with D/FA only or a Inter-Departmental meeting. He is to let me know which option is preferred.

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Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of the Victims Commission are: -

(1) To conduct a review of services and arrangements in place, in this jurisdiction, to meet the needs of those who have suffered as a result of violent action associated with the conflict in Northern Ireland over the past thirty years and to identify what further measures need to be taken to acknowledge and address the suffering and concerns of those in question. This would include, in particular, consideration of the following:

- the provisions of the Good Friday Multi-party Agreement in relation to victims;

- the needs and concerns of persons, who have sustained serious injury, and members of the immediate families of those who have died or sustained serious injuries in the services of the State as a consequence of violent acts ensuing from the conflict;

- the needs and concerns of victims and the families of victims of major outrages including those of the Dublin, Monaghan and Dundalk bombings.

(2) To advise on how the support given to victims by their families, in helping them to cope with the immediate aftermath and continuing consequences of violence, can be acknowledged and sustained.

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TOPICS

1. Terms of reference
2. Proposed approach to work
3. Liaison officer
4. Release of prisoners
5. Sensitive Cases - McAnaspie, Ludlow, Oliver , Corcoran
   Dublin/Monaghan/Dundalk bombings
6. The "Disappeared"
7. Consultations & publicity in Northern Ireland
8. Press conference
9. Victims provisions in Good Friday agreement
10. South Africa

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