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5/11 3 MAR 1980

MINISTER.

Mr Hamilton

cc PS/PUS (L & B)
PS/Mr Bell
Mr Bloomfield
Mr Parkes
Dr Quigley
Mr Finney

*Referred to
Command
please*

Mr Goodhart (L & B)
Lord Elton (L & B)

1. I visited a Work Preparation Unit in the Ardoyne today and whilst there spoke inter alia to a uniformed RUC man who has been on the beat in the area for 3 years, and to the Parish Priest.
2. Both told me that the unemployment level in the area is between 50% (according to the Parish Priest) and a staggering 70% (according to the RUC figure). At varying times only between 20% and 50% of the school leavers find jobs.
3. The Ardoyne contains some 20,000 Catholics completely surrounded by hard Protestant areas and in the past has suffered from extreme fear. In consequence even today there is a mental block against going outside the area to look for a job or even to the nearest recreation ground.
4. Physically the urban environment has all the hall-marks of a deprived ghetto - a heavily built-up area of inner city urban decay where the only open spaces are semi-cleared bomb sites. One can only imagine the psychological effect of living out one's life in such surroundings, imprisoned within them by fear, with an utter hopelessness of ever being gainfully employed or doing anything useful with one's life. It is not surprising that the Ardoyne is regarded as a 'dangerous' area where a strong and, I would add, a distasteful army presence has to be maintained.

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5. It strikes me that if we wish to display any good intentions towards the minority community and to tackle urban and social deprivation, the Ardoyne by its compact nature is a good place in which to start.

6. The Housing Executive has done something and built three or four terraces of small houses which are greatly appreciated and show little signs of vandalism or even of graffiti. This I feel is a promising indicator for a concerted inter-departmental effort to treat this area as a pilot Enterprise Zone. Not only would we satisfy a crying social need but we would also reduce tension and hopefully the need for such a strong army presence.

7. Immediately I would suggest:-

(a) An operation 'face-lift' to improve the physical environment. This should be attempted through 'community involvement' drawing upon the local unemployed. Probably Enterprise Ulster would be the best vehicle for this, working together with the Department of Environment in a home rehabilitation programme and the Department of Education for the provision of open-air recreational facilities.

(b) The seconding of a Development Officer to the Brookfield Industrial Estate where upto the moment local community leaders have formed what is known as the Flax Trust to encourage businessmen to set up small enterprises.

(c) The establishment of a GTC element possibly in the field of electronics. The nearest GTC is at Boucher Road, two bus rides away.

8. I realise that all this will involve a diversion of resources but I feel that this is predicated by the opening paragraphs of this note and some sixty years of obvious Government neglect.

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9. I have put these thoughts on paper in order to invite your reaction and thus to see whether it is worthwhile troubling the Secretary of State. I would therefore be grateful for your comments.

Uwe Conenk

for HUGH ROSSI
12 March 1980

*Dictated by Mr Rossi
and signed in his absence*

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MJT