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CONFIDENTIAL

4/8/84 Sir Enda Bell - I have returned
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2/ Mr Merifield
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Mr P Carvill
Central Secretariat
Stormont Castle
BELFAST

Mr Carvill
113
14 MAY 1984
REFER TO:

9 May 1984

Dear Sir,

ALIENATION

Thank you for sending me a copy of your note to Tony Merifield. I would not disagree with most of it, and certainly not with the central thrust.

I think we are in real danger of talking ourselves into a crisis of confidence. If everybody shouts alienation, and Peter Barry and Paisley predict civil war people may feel they have to oblige. Luckily they are talking about different civil wars, or at least different sets of aggressors. It is well to remember too that, SDLP and the forum and the Bishops are tending to use Sinn Fein as bogey men to secure compliance with their demands without undue effort on their part. There is a great deal of confusion between alienation which constitutes withdrawal from the system, and even apathy, and political disaffection which signals dissatisfaction.

If everybody sits around lamenting, there will of course be a political vacuum which somebody (probably SP) will fill. SDLP in particular, if they are to survive, need to get down to solid constituency work, and to involvement in the political process locally. They have not shown much appetite for this over the past couple of years.

There are odd things happening in the community - in West Belfast, Creggan, Newry. Marriage is going out of fashion, and whatever the alienation from the state, alienation from the church is just as great, with little more than token adherence in the 16-25 age group. I think society is much less stable, but how it will go is anybody's guess. There is also a differential between the employed and the jobless, the poor and the middle-class which is increasingly associated with geographic and sectarian segregation. This is, I think, potentially dangerous and may indeed lead to alienation. There is also a form of what might be described as post-new-town blues in Antrim and Craigavon which are very worrying.

We have no evidence of people requiring to use the system or to co-operate. A survey in E & S Belfast by PPRU indicated that 85% of people would go first to DHSS local office for advice on benefits. In West Belfast, despite very active welfare rights campaigns the figure is not significantly lower (admittedly on a smaller sample). The impression I get from the local office is of broad acceptability, except when the temperature has been raised by some security force activity.

I think that most disaffection is associated with security policy, arrests, road blocks, detentions, and with a few notorious court cases, with supergrass, and with the apparent failure (common I think to most western democracies and even attempted elsewhere) to bring erring guardians of the law to book. I think this is the area that policy analysts should concentrate on.

Yours
Man

CONFIDENTIAL

M N HAYES