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cc PS/SOS (L&B)
PS/PUS. (L&B)
PS/Mr Bloomfield
Mr Brennan
Mr Stephens
Mr Chesterton
Mr Elliott
Mr Spence —
Mr Bell



RSS 185/6

1. SECRETARY (Mr Barry)
2. MINISTER (Mr Needham)

DIVIS FLATS

The leak which we feared about the review of policy being undertaken by NIHE and the Department and its likely outcome has now occurred. The report in the Irish News refers to the part played by the Irish civil servants of the Anglo Irish Secretariat and the Irish News confirmed to NIHE that the Irish provided the story to their reporter. Apparently Dr Hendron's interest was kindled by a call from the Irish News and he received confirmation from an unspecified source that there was some fire to accompany the smoke.

As we agreed recently with Mr Ferguson (Chairman, NIHE) the Board of NIHE will be given by means of an oral presentation tomorrow the results of the Investment Appraisal of the various refurbishment options and demolition/new build option and their agreement will be sought to a further study of the practical implications if a revision of current policy should be proposed dealing with eg the possible timing of further demolition, opportunities for rehousing of displaced families, effects on current and future waiting lists, possible sites for new build to take "overspill" etc.

In view of this the Executive's response to the speculation about a change of policy has been to reiterate its adherence to the current policy (demolition of a further two blocks and offer refurbishment/redesign of the remainder); to confirm that all difficult housing issues which are the subject of representations and of public concern are continually reviewed and that the future of the Divis complex is no exception; but the current reports are speculative. The Department's response to enquiries is that NIHE is the statutory housing agency whose statement on the matter is definitive and accepted fully by the Department (I have told our Press Office that if closely questioned it could be confirmed that the Department's approval to further demolition would be required but has not been sought).

We will need to consider how we take matters forward after the meeting of NIHE's Board tomorrow. The Secretary (Mr Barry) and I will be meeting Mr Blease on other business today. We will discuss this issue with them and will provide advice following the meeting of NIHE's Board tomorrow.

F McCANN
24 June 1986

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