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AJM/777/SB

cc Mr Bloomfield

*Mr Brennan
*Mr Carvill
*Dr Harbison ✓
*Mr Reeve

Mr Angus

(*with papers)

ALIENATION: ATTITUDE SURVEYS

I would be grateful if this paper could be put before the next PCC. Dr Quigley, Mr Parkes and Mr Hayes have seen the paper in draft and it has been amended to take account of their views.

2. I hope it may be possible to consider the paper soon, so that Dr Darby can be given an indication of our intentions. This is necessary so that he can retain one or two key members of staff.

3. Dr Harbison should be invited to the PCC discussion if this is agreeable to the Chairman.

AJM.

A J MERIFIELD

6 March 1985

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ALIENATION: ATTITUDE SURVEYSProposal

1. Following discussions by a group involving NIO, Central Secretariat and PPRU it is proposed that Government should promote further examination of those areas of community disadvantage (both real and perceived) which lead to a sense of alienation from the structures and institutions of government. The aim would be to identify more precisely the causes of discontent, to see whether perceptions (as well as the basic facts) are changing over time and to consider how in the meantime significant discontent might be alleviated. The study would examine causes and attitudes within and across, as well as between, communities.

Background

2. Political comment, and the attitudes of individuals in the community, bear witness to the general nature of alienation:

- an expectancy that the individual's behaviour cannot determine the occurrence of events which he seeks;
- a low expectancy that satisfactory predictions about future outcomes can be made;
- a high expectancy that socially unapproved behaviour is required to achieve individual goals;
- the assigning by an individual of a low value to goals and behaviour which are valued highly in the society in which he lives.

3. This largely springs from a broad set of political and social attitudes (a "state of mind"). However generalities are not a sufficient base for policy decisions and it is suggested that more information is needed about views and beliefs (which may be favourable or neutral as well as negative), towards specific aspects of the structures and institutions of Government, and how these may influence political behaviour. Such study could not be related only to the minority community. Both sides of the NI community are affected by their experience of the economic, social, environmental, security and political manifestations of government (including the administration and enforcement of justice), and by their perceptions of

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the motives of those responsible for deciding or implementing government policies - perceptions which are coloured also by ideological preconceptions.

4. However minority community reactions will still be important because recent PPRU studies indicate that:

- (a) while in some socio-economic areas like educational participation the objective position of the minority community (and other "disadvantaged" groups) has improved since 1971 relative to the majority, both in absolute terms and subjectively, in many more areas this is not so and the minority community is likely to perceive a further deterioration in their position over the next decade;
- (b) a correlation can be discerned between some of the factors of disadvantage or deprivation and political behaviour and allegiances; and
- (c) the majority will be affected both by the attitudes and behaviour of the minority, and by threats to, or changes in, their own position.

Present Studies About Community Provision and Attitudes

5. A good deal of relevant work is already in train or under consideration. For example:

- (a) statistical studies are being developed by the PPRU, based on data from the Census, the Labour Force and the Continuous Household Surveys, which have yielded information on household conditions, employment, educational opportunities, health etc. A proposal is awaited from LSE's International Centre for Applied Economics to study the provision, uptake and benefit of a wide range of social programmes for NI as a whole and separately for the two communities;
- (b) the FEA has commissioned research work in the fields of employment and education. Demographers from QUB and UU co-operate with PPRU on population trends in NI;
- (c) attitudes in particular communities have been examined in a series of community based studies (eg Ballygawley, Ardoyne and Divis). These have been most recently directed by Dr Darby of the Centre for the Study of Conflict at the University of Ulster. The aim has been to provide information on the

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dynamics, views and beliefs of residents within each community as a contribution to understanding the impact of past and future policies. (At a lesser level small groups from the community discuss their relative positions and attitudes at the Ulster People's College);

- (d) NIO reviewed published material on the impact of violence in mid-1984 as part of an LOB project, and may update this study periodically;
- (e) political attitudes in their broadest sense are analysed from time-to-time in the media (in 1984 MORI conducted surveys for Miss Mary Holland's "In the Shadow of the Gun" in May, and for "Brass Tacks" in June. The Economist and Belfast Telegraph continued their periodic surveys). These polls vary in quality, and in the validity and completeness of the responses obtained.

6. Other proposals are in the early stages of development:-

- (a) to "assist in the search for changes within the Province which would make it possible for the minority community to identify itself with Northern Ireland in a positive way (without abandoning the aspiration of unity by consent)" the Policy Studies Institute propose "to involve various groups of citizens in NI in private discussions to define the features of the life and institutions of the Province which now cause friction and to examine whether there are reforms which might improve matters without causing compensatory alienation on the other side";
- (b) the Northern Consensus Group (Professor Rea et al) proposed to the Secretary of State in late 1984 that a Government sponsored "Commission on Alienation in NI" should be set up to describe symptoms of alienation, analyse its causes, reappraise the role of those bodies set up by Government to deal with defined injustices, and generate recommendations aimed at eradicating the causes. The Secretary of State has rejected the idea of a formal Commission but has invited the Group to consider how it might stimulate discussion within NI of contentious issues such as traditional marches;
- (c) the recently announced SACHR study into the adequacy and effectiveness of existing laws and institutions in securing freedom from discrimination. Although the study may pro-

duce material relevant to attitudes in the community this is not its main function;

- (d) work by the ROI sponsored Irish Information Partnership which is based in Europe. This body has been selective in its use of material.

7. Although this suggests a proliferation of endeavour the output is unlikely to be wholly satisfactory in terms of presenting a reliable picture (whether snapshot or movie). The Group has recommended therefore that:

- (a) statistical studies (5(a)/5(b)) which illuminate the socio-economic position of the different sections of the community in absolute and relative terms, should continue. Where bodies like the Policy Studies Institute are developing relevant studies, professional contacts with PPRU should be used positively to encourage consistency of approach;
- (b) the community based studies targetted at particular areas or groups(5(c)) should be maintained with attention being directed now at a small integrated community, a Protestant working class urban area, and an isolated border area. Such studies involve detailed participation by resident research workers (one per area) under supervision. We believe that Dr Darby (Ulster University) would be willing to direct such a study and is prepared to apply for funding for a research worker (ca £10,000pa) and 1-2 research assistants from Co-operation North and a US body commended to us by the US Consul General. The research assistants could be supported under DENI's normal award schemes. Successful work depends on the appointment of suitably qualified (and courageous) research workers and it is understood that candidates are currently available. Dr Darby would therefore welcome Government support for an application to Co-operation North, together with any short-term bridging to enable him to retain key staff whilst he completes enquiries for outside funding;
- (c) the review reported in paragraph 5(d) above should be updated on an annual basis as part of the study mentioned above;
- (d) new research should be undertaken using modern techniques applied (inter alia) by the Home Office, which would seek to determine the nature of the attitudes surrounding major government institutions in NI shown by individuals selected from different backgrounds, and to establish those feelings/factors

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(eg fairness, personal relevance, participation etc) which inclined attitudes towards a sense of alienation or otherwise, and then to design a study which could provide a periodic assessment of these factors. The aim would be to assist in ascertaining the importance of "alienation" as a process in determining behaviour towards key institutions, and in weighing the options for changes in the social, economic and political environment which might influence attitudes. Contact would be maintained with the Home Office to draw upon any lessons learned from relevant studies in GB. The proposals, described more fully in the Annex, are estimated to cost some £30,000 over a two-year period. They will need to be carried out by a body outside Government and there should be an understanding that the results would most probably be published. We believe that research staff competent to direct such a project are identifiable within academic institutions in Northern Ireland but they are likely to look to Government to fund the whole, or a main part, of the project;

- (e) from time to time the group mentioned in paragraph 1 should review progress in the various study areas, but the commissioning of any research should be undertaken by PPRU.

? link with SSG ?

8. It has been agreed in discussion between NIO and DFP that the PPRU should assume responsibility for commissioning whatever research may be approved in the areas proposed in this paper. It would be necessary to review PPRU's budget to see to what extent it could accommodate the cost of the project in paragraph 7(d) without jeopardising other worthwhile work, but it is understood that any necessary adjustment to PPRU's budget should not pose insurmountable difficulty.

9. The PCC is invited to consider the issues raised in the paper, and subject to any comments they may wish to make to agree the recommendations in paragraph 7, inter alia indicating whether the applications for funding implied in paragraphs 7(b) and 7(d) could be entertained by the relevant Departments.

10. The Secretary of State would be informed of any recommendations to proceed with research in this field.

AJP

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1. Alienation is used both to describe an 'end state' - that is, the person/group under consideration is or is not alienated - and also as a 'process' in which the alienation leads to certain acts by the person or group. The proposal accepts that in the NI context data on both aspects is required. On the first, knowledge concerning how specific beliefs and views develop and are maintained is relevant; on the second, the impact that the beliefs held have on the present or future choices open to the person should be valuable. For example such an analysis may identify areas where policy change could modify both the belief systems of the individual and more importantly alter his choices - for example in voting behaviour, in deciding to work with the police or other security forces etc.

Research Objectives

2. A three stage research approach is proposed, each part being separate in itself but linked to an overall development of information which describes the present position, examines the development of the beliefs in particular areas and investigates the susceptibility to change in these beliefs.

3. The project would have the following objectives (objectives which would refer to both communities and relate beliefs to demographic, social and economic parameters):

- to determine the nature of attitudes and beliefs surrounding major institutions, structures and agencies in NI;
- to identify the attitudinal dimensions along which Alienation appears to exist - for example participation, fairness, personal relevance etc;
- to design a study which would enable periodic assessments of the above areas to be completed which would produce reliable and meaningful results;
- to provide detailed understanding of the development of the negative attitudes and views towards particular institutions or structures for key groups in the community;
- to ascertain the importance of Alienation as a process in determining the behaviour of individuals from differing backgrounds towards key institutions and the options for change in the intentions and behaviour through environmental change.

Project

4. The study would be a two year research project involving the following proposed stages:

- (a) a study of a general sample of the adult population using already developed social-psychological measures of attitudes and beliefs towards a range of institutions, structures agencies in NI (as in the note below). The measure, as well as identifying general evaluative attitudes towards the areas, would enable some identification of the specific dimensions along which differing sub-groups in the community vary. For example, dimensions might include perceived fairness, involvement and participation, importance of agency etc to the individual;
- (b) key areas identified from the first stage would be examined in detail with particular target groups. For example, if the operation of the police is an area of concern, groups of young unemployed from both communities might be one key group to examine. Information to be collected from each individual would include, as well as social and economic core data, specific experiences with the police such as whether the respondent had been stopped in the last year (in a car, or on foot); how many times he had been stopped in the last year; whether he had been arrested and taken to the police station in the last year; respondents beliefs about the good and bad points of the police; attitudes to the police, what happened in particular contacts between the police and the youth and parental and peer views. This stage would examine whether the attitudes held can be explained in terms of actual experiences, or the importance of the attitudes of others in determining these views;
- (c) the third stage would, on the basis of the detailed information collected above, attempt to examine how beliefs, intentions and eventually choices in behaviour towards the key areas may be influenced and possibly altered. This part of the study would involve detailed work with small numbers of individuals which would develop from the information collected earlier.

Resources and Time Scale

5. The research could only be satisfactorily completed outside

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government. It is suggested that a research director working within NI be identified, and that the appointment of an experienced full-time research officer working towards the research director should complete the project in two years. As well as funding of the research officer, secretarial and computer backup, resources would be required for fieldwork, particularly at stage 1 of the project. A total of approximately £30,000 would be required over the two years of the project.

NOTE (see para 4(a))

TOPICS TO BE COVERED IN PROPOSED RESEARCH STUDY

(a) Politics

- (i) Preferences for Political Development
- (ii) Party Loyalty
- (iii) Assembly
- (iv) Local politicians
- (v) European Community
- (vi) Perceptions of Republic of Ireland/Great Britain
- (vii) Voting behaviour

(b) Security

- (i) Attitudes towards RUC, UDR and Army
- (ii) Extradition
- (iii) Informers
- (iv) Plastic Baton Rounds
- (v) Police Complaints Procedure
- (vi) The Courts

(c) Economics

- (i) Unemployment
- (ii) Inflation
- (iii) Benefits
- (iv) Trade Unions
- (v) Job Markets

(d) Other Issues

- (i) Housing/NIHE
- (ii) Discrimination/FEA
- (iii) Education Services
- (iv) Health Service
- (v) Religion
- (vi) Prisons
- (vii) Higher Education