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cc Mr Johnston
Mr Dodds (on return)
Mr Peover
Mr Woods

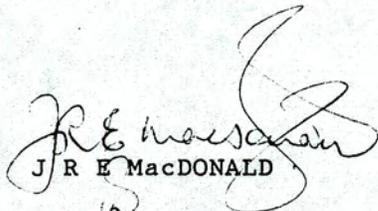
Mr Holmes

COMMUNITY RELATIONS - BILATERAL DISCUSSIONS

You will remember that we discussed follow-up action on Sir Kenneth Bloomfield's minute of 29 June 1988 in preparation for bilateral discussions between the Central Community Relations Unit and this Department. The Minister wishes to see 'the thinking of DENI in preparation for this bilateral' and I believe it was in your mind to arrange an internal meeting involving appropriate Heads of Divisions once responses had been received to my minute of 20 July 1988. On timing you thought some time after mid-September so as to have something ready by the end of September/early October.

I have tried to distil the responses into one paper and a copy of this, in draft form, is attached. On Cultural Diversity Mr Spence's minute dated 28 July 1988 records the thinking at the Centre. I understand that you wish to give some further thought to this yourself.

I have copied this to each Head of Division who contributed to the content of the draft.


J R E MacDONALD

15th September 1988

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION: NORTHERN IRELAND

COMMUNITY RELATIONS: PROPOSED BILATERALS

1. The purpose of this paper is to set out the up-to-date position on initiatives/schemes which contribute to the improvement of community relations in Northern Ireland. Under the 1975 Community Relations Order, DENI is responsible for formulating and sponsoring policies for the improvement of community relations. In the main this focuses on schools but, as the following paragraphs show, other sections of the education system, and the community itself, have significant roles to play in fostering good community relations.

SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND YOUTH GROUPS

2. DENI has a long standing commitment to promoting good community relations both within and between schools. In 1982 it issued the Circular "The Improvement of Community Relations: The Contribution of Schools" (Appendix a). In this, all involved in education were reminded that:

"Every teacher, every school manager, Board member and trustee, and every educational administrator within the system has a responsibility for helping children to learn to understand and respect each other, and their differing customs and traditions, and of preparing them to live together in harmony in adult life."

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3. Community relations activities in schools normally come under Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) Programmes and Cross Community Contact Schemes. These programmes and contact schemes are promoted, increasingly, through curricular and extra-curricular activities in schools and colleges throughout the Province and also feature in the activities of some youth clubs. They fall into three main categories:

- EMU promoted through curricular and extra-curricular activities within and between schools inside Northern Ireland itself. This work is undertaken by a number of bodies including the EMU Committee of the Northern Ireland Council for Educational Development (NICED) and its Field Officers, the DENI Inspectorate, the Education and Library Boards, Community Relations in Schools (CRIS) groups, the 6th Form Peace and Reconciliation in School Movement (PRISM), the action research of the School of Conflict Studies in the University of Ulster, the activities of the Youth Service.

- EMU as a dimension of religious education. Prominent in this category is the joint work of the Irish Council of Churches/Irish Commission for Justice and Peace, the Corrymeela Community, the Christian Education Movement, the Columbanus Community, the Quaker Peace Committee, the Churches Central Committee for Community Work, the Choose Life Initiative. The law does not permit DENI to influence religious education but it is possible for it to support those aspects of the work of these bodies which are concerned with EMU and cross community contact.

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- EMU in a broader context. An important aspect of this dimension of EMU is the European Studies initiative which seeks to promote EMU and better relationships generally within these Islands in the context of the European Community. This is the purpose of the European Studies 12-15 Project and the 6th Form European Studies Pilot Study (Appendix c). Co-operation North and Anglo-Irish Encounter are also very active in improving relationships through curricular and extra-curricular contact in this broader context.

Inevitably there is a degree of overlap between these categories and there are some EMU activities which do not readily fit into any of them.

4. To all of these the DENI Inspectorate lend their support and also initiate specific DENI EMU schemes, for example, "Joint Work in the Environment" for primary schools and EMU courses for history teachers. In 1987 the Department launched the "Cross Community Contact Scheme" (Circular 1987/47 Appendix d) - and has allocated a further £0.2m each year for three years to encourage joint activities between schools and youth groups. Under this scheme schools and colleges can bid for funds for new contact schemes so long as the proposed activity is purposeful, systematic and requires a genuinely collaborative effort by the young people involved.

5. The claim is made that too little is being done and that research findings indicate that contact between schools across the religious divide is still limited. This criticism fails to appreciate the difficulties and the very challenging nature of this work. Progress has been steady, can undoubtedly appear to be slow, but aspirations for EMU both in terms of scale

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and quality must be realistic. It is encouraging that research findings also reveal a willingness on the part of the great majority of teachers to undertake EMU even at a time of unparalleled changes in other aspects of education which are already making additional demands on their time. The intention is that these contact programmes will lay the foundations for better relationships across the divide, creating circumstances where young people need each other to complete tasks and thus, by working together, come to respect and trust one another. The ultimate ideal is to have every pupil and every teacher involved in EMU on a regular basis so that inter-school contacts are seen as a natural and unexceptional part of the life of all schools, colleges and youth groups in Northern Ireland.

INTEGRATED EDUCATION (see also paragraph 22)

6. In Northern Ireland, as elsewhere in the United Kingdom, the law requires, subject to certain provisos (for example, the avoidance of unreasonable public expenditure), that pupils be educated in accordance with the wishes of their parents. There is no statutory bar to children of different religions being educated together. In law, every school in Northern Ireland, whether controlled (state) or voluntary, is open to pupils of any, or no, religious affiliations.

7. The Government's policy (and that of successive administrations in Northern Ireland) has been that integrated education should be encouraged wherever there is a local wish for it, and it will support practical proposals which it is satisfied reflect the wishes of local people and which do not involve undue public expenditure. However, there can be no question of

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forcing integration on anyone who does not want it and new integrated schools must prove their viability before they can be given grant-aided status.

8. The 6 schools which now have maintained status are:-

	DATE OF MAINTAINED STATUS	PRESENT ENROLMENT
Lagan College	1 April 1984	500
Hazelwood Primary School	1 January 1987	161 (excluding nursery pupils)
Forge Primary School	1 July 1987	127 (excluding nursery pupils)
Hazelwood College	1 August 1988	148
All Children Integrated Primary School, Newcastle	1 August 1988	67 (excluding nursery pupils)
Bridge Integrated Primary School, Banbridge	1 August 1988	75

85% grants are available from the Department of Education for expenditure on

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approved capital works. The salaries of the teachers are paid in full by the Department and other day-to-day running costs are met by the Education and Library Board.

9. There are at present 2 independent integrated schools which have not yet been granted maintained status (though in respect of the former a development proposal to that effect has now been published):-

	DATE OF OPENING	PRESENT ENROLMENT
Millstrand Integrated Primary School, Portrush	September 1988	57
Windmill Integrated Primary School, Dungannon	September 1988	not known

COLLEGES OF EDUCATION

10. All INSET courses are promoted on a non-segregated basis; indeed there are specific INSET programmes on EMU and community activity led by Mr McIver. However, the more sensitive area is the promotion of EMU in the colleges of education and over the last year or so the Minister has made considerable efforts to encourage the colleges to place EMU at the centre of their activities. Indeed he has been in personal correspondence with both Principals, who will shortly be asked by the Department to consider some

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specific proposals, currently being formulated under the Secretary's guidance. The essence of these proposals will be joint study of various approaches to EMU, but this will fall short of actual joint teaching on a subject-to-subject basis. To back this up, the colleges will also be asked to consider the possibility of introducing joint study visits for first or second year students to schools across the religious divide. Moreover, with the imminent publication of the EMU Primary Guideline, it is hoped that the colleges can be given a role in the main dissemination process. These and other ideas have a high priority for the Minister who aims to see real progress towards changing existing practice within the next 12 months.

HIGHER EDUCATION

11. Government policy in relation to Higher Education is to extend opportunities to the whole community of Northern Ireland. The Charters of both universities in Northern Ireland provide specific safeguards to ensure equality of treatment for all persons irrespective of religious belief, political opinions, race or sex. The Higher Education system is, therefore, of an integrated nature and the student population mirrors the local population. There is nothing to suggest that there has been any political indoctrination through the activities carried out in the universities.

12. The universities provide courses and facilities for students of all political persuasions, all are free to express their views and their student unions provide a platform for speakers from all political parties. By and large the students' unions have adopted a responsible attitude to local political issues and have sought to avoid polarisation within the student

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body. Students' unions are rarely to the fore-front in local political debate - for example there has been no student view expressed on the Anglo-Irish accord. This effort to play down religious and political differences has allowed the Higher Education Sector to function as a positive and stabilising influence within the community.

13. Within the Higher Education system, positive steps are being taken to encourage greater understanding between the communities. This can be seen through the introduction in UU of a BA Honours Course in Peace Studies which focuses on particular problems, and in doing so, seeks to identify means of resolving them. The course involves a collaborative linkage with the Institute of HE in Limerick. There is also a "Religion in Ireland" project which aims to increase pupils' understanding and appreciation of differing Christian traditions in Ireland and to investigate problems which arise in the teaching of religion in Ireland.

14. The development of the Magee Campus of UU which, because of its geographical location, affords opportunities for students from a wide area, both in Northern Ireland and in the Republic, will increase the student capacity by about 750 places.

15. There is also a considerable amount of formal and informal co-operation between Northern Ireland universities and those in the Republic of Ireland and there are no impediments to students from the south studying in Northern Ireland - they have access in the same way as any other student. The actual number of places offered by Northern Ireland universities to students from the Republic shows that the trend is clearly upwards. In 1986, 458 places were

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afforded whilst in 1988 the number had increased to 888. Both universities have had considerably increased interest shown by potential students from the Republic particularly following the 1986 European Court ruling on Government's liability to pay the fees of European Community Nationals.

16. Government would actively encourage the Northern Ireland universities to co-operate with the universities in the Republic and to collaborate where it is mutually beneficial to do so.

DISTRICT COUNCILS

17. The Department of Education has charged the 26 District Councils with the responsibility for supporting community work within their areas. The links between community relations and community development/services have long been a subject for debate. The Pat Carvill Working Group reported in 1986 that, in effect, communities which can analyse their own needs and objectives are better placed to identify common interests with other sections of the community and are therefore likely to have the necessary confidence and motivation to overcome traditional divisions.

18. The Department annually approves a budget for each Council's recurrent expenditure on community work. This is to assist with the cost of employing community work staff, operating or grant-aiding community resource centres and community centres and supporting voluntary groups. Seventy-five per cent grant is paid on this approved figure. In 1976/77, the approved grant represented 75% of the budgets submitted; by 1987/88, however, this percentage had fallen to 51% even though the amounts made available had increased each

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year.

19. For the 1988/89 financial year it was necessary to make some adjustments to programmes within the Northern Ireland Block to ensure the best value from the resources available. In his assessment of assisting priorities the Minister, Dr Mawhinney, reviewed requirements in relation to District Council expenditure on Sport and Community Programmes which, unlike mainstream education, are supported by the rates and it was decided to redistribute part of the planned provision for grant to District Councils to provide continued support for the priority areas (education and the classroom). Although the overall reduction amounted to 15.89%, the fact that Belfast Urban Programme funding was due to cease in any case for 31 March 1988 has meant that the average reduction in practice has amounted to about 12.6%. The percentage of the budgets approved has fallen to 43% (£1,789,500 in grant terms).

20. Much data has been produced on a reduction in the level of grant which DENI pays to the Councils. The role of District Councils in terms of Community Services has also been fully documented and considered in the Pat Carvill Report (referred to above) an earlier review carried out by the Minister's Advisory Body on Community Work.

EDUCATION REFORMS

21. The Minister and Sir Kenneth will both be fully conversant with the main 'community relations' implications of the reform proposals, particularly in relation to the grant-maintained integrated schools (GMIS) aspects. What follows is therefore only a brief checklist of the main points. It deals with

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decisions which have not yet been made public, and the material is thus highly confidential at this stage.

GMIS AND INTEGRATED EDUCATION

22. The decision to drop the 'ordinary' form of GMS will in itself have a certain 'community relations' impact, as an acknowledgement by Government of the concerns expressed during consultation - not least by the RC church authorities. More positively, the measures now envisaged for the support and promotion of integrated education include:

- the introduction of GMIS, with no specific 'denominational mix' threshold and with revised ballot arrangements (in line with changes made to the England and Wales legislation);
- the retention of the legislative provisions for controlled integrated schools, but with new acquisition procedures similar to GMIS;
- financial support for newly-established integrated schools on a 'provisional' basis while the schools prove their viability (rate of grant still to be determined);
- financial support for a new 'umbrella body' to co-ordinate the work of the existing trusts etc in the sphere of integrated education. Body to be non-statutory and established by existing agencies (though it is possible that existing NICIE could fulfil this role) but the Department to take legal powers to grant-aid it (grant rates still to

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be determined);

- integrated schools of all categories to be exempt from normal 'physical capacity' constraints on their intakes, and to be given priority in the capital programme to provide the additional pupil-places required.

This package of measures represents a major new Government initiative aimed at improving community cohesion through facilitating the expression of parental wishes for integrated schooling for their children (see also paragraphs 6 to 9).

Common Curriculum

a. Position of Irish Language

23. The (revised) curriculum proposals, although not making Irish a compulsory subject (which would be politically and practically untenable) place Irish in a unique position within the non-mandatory subjects, as the only one for which a programme of study and assessment criteria will be drawn up (use of the programme and criteria will be compulsory in Irish-medium schools, optional in others). This unique position for Irish should meet the views of some (though not all) respondents to the consultative paper, who argued the need to give greater 'esteem' to the position of Irish in the curriculum. (In secondary schools, it will not be permissible to take Irish as a substitute for a major EC language, but precisely the same situation applies in relation to Welsh in Wales.)

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b. Education for Mutual Understanding/Cultural Heritage

24. These 2 cross-curricular themes, among others, will be compulsory in all schools, and their content will be centrally prescribed. Together, they will require a greater exploration of the culture and traditions of 'the other' community and, with associated inter-school contacts, are aimed at improving community relations through greater mutual understanding and respect.

c. Other Curricular Implications

25. In addition to the specific issues mentioned above, the curriculum proposals will have other significant, though perhaps less immediately apparent, implications which will have a differential impact as between the 2 communities. It is possible to discuss these only in general or aggregate terms: effects in individual locations are a matter of conjecture.

i. Curricular balance: FEA (and other) studies have shown that the curriculum in Catholic schools has tended traditionally to be biased towards the humanities rather than science, and that this may in turn have a detrimental effect on employment opportunities. The requirement, under common curriculum, to provide sizeable elements of science and technology for all pupils in the 11-16 age range, may therefore have a proportionally more beneficial impact in this sector.

ii. Low-achievers: The proportion of pupils leaving school with no, or

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low, qualifications is higher in the Catholic schools sector. To the extent, therefore, that curricular reforms - with the related assessment and testing - succeed in their avowed intention of raising standards for this group (in part because the attainment targets and programmes of study may raise teacher and pupil expectations of what is, or should be, attainable), there may likewise be a more beneficial impact on the Catholic schools sector.

Open Enrolment

26. There are proportionally fewer places in Catholic-managed grammar schools than in other grammar schools. Under open enrolment policy, all grammar schools are likely to fill to capacity. To the extent that (as we suspect) the non-Catholic grammar schools have more spare places, this imbalance in grammar school attendance is likely to increase. This in turn may impact on the apparent academic achievement of the 2 communities. Statistical analysis shows that at the upper end of the ability range - when the grammar and secondary intermediate sectors are viewed separately - there is no significant difference between the performance of pupils in the 2 communities. However when the grammar and SIS results are aggregated, the position in the combined Catholic-managed sector looks less favourable because of the "weighting" effect of the proportionally larger non-Catholic grammar sector. It follows that this distortion is likely to increase if there is a differential increase in grammar enrolments in favour of the non-Catholic grammar schools. It may therefore appear, on the face of the statistics, that the Catholic school sector has been disadvantaged as a result of open enrolment policy.

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27. Whilst, in the form described above, the problem is merely a statistical one (which could be overcome by reference to the performance of pupils in the grammar and SIS sectors separately), there is the more fundamental underlying question of the relative availability of grammar school places in the 2 communities. This is not a new phenomenon (nor is it of the Government's making - the majority of grammar school places are provided by the voluntary rather than state sector) but is likely to become a focus of attention because of 3 exacerbating factors:

a. the abolition of the 27% grammar quota (as a consequence of dropping the present 11+ when the new attainment tests are introduced) and the resultant upsurge in demand for grammar school places generally;

b. the public perception, as a consequence of a. and of open enrolment policy, that pupils in the Protestant community are in a more advantageous position in terms of access to a grammar school education;

c. the fact that, demographically, it is projected that from the early 1990's onwards broadly equal numbers of Protestant and Catholic pupils are due to transfer from primary to secondary school.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY, HERITAGE

28. To date the Department has not allocated resources to the Arts Council or our three museums on condition that they encourage the coming together of the two communities in Northern Ireland to study and understand each other's culture and heritage. ACNI and all three museums would undoubtedly claim that

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much of their activity does encourage better understanding and the coming together of people in Northern Ireland. Some would question the value of "forcing" the pace.

In any event this topic is already the subject of discussions involving the CCRU and people from the Arts Council and the museums and is being pursued within the Community Relations Steering Group. The Department is already being kept in touch with these developments and, while they will undoubtedly feature in the proposed bilateral discussions, the major issues are likely to be determined within the Steering Group (see Appendix e).

APPENDICES

29. The following Appendices are attached:-

- a. Circular 1982/21 - The Improvement of Community Relations: The Contribution of Schools.
- b. A copy of the General Lesson (issued by the Minister to all school principals).
- c. Details of the European Studies (Ireland and Great Britain) Project.
- d. Circular 1987/47 - Cross-Community Contact Scheme.
- e. Copy of Mr Spence's minute dated 28 July 1988 on Cultural Diversity.

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- f. Details of the Children's Community Relations Holiday Scheme.
- g. Up-to-date information on the Cross-Community Contact Scheme.

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