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BRIEFING FOR MEETING WITH ARCHBISHOP DALY

HISTORICAL NOTE ON INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

1. At present, initial teacher training (ITT) courses in Northern Ireland are provided in four institutions: Stranmillis and St Mary's Colleges, Belfast, Queen's University, Belfast and the University of Ulster. The present structure and pattern of ITT provision derives largely from decisions taken in the early to mid 1980s following the Government's decisions on the recommendations of the aftermath of the Chilver Report on Teacher Training published in May 1980.

Chilver Report

2. In 1978, the then Minister (Lord Melchett), appointed a Higher Education Review Group, chaired by Sir Henry (now Lord) Chilver, to undertake a study of higher education provision in Northern Ireland and to make recommendations. It subsequently became clear that urgent consideration needed to be given to the rationalisation of teacher training provision in the light of declining school rolls, which in turn were leading to a reduction in demand for newly qualified teachers, and the fact that provision was spread over seven institutions and was still geared to the needs of the mid-70s when teacher demand was at its peak. Consequently, in October 1979, the new Minister (Lord Elton) requested the Review Group to submit, in an interim report, recommendations on the structure of teacher education appropriate to the substantially smaller numbers of students in teacher education now envisaged in Northern Ireland.

3. One of the main recommendations in the Chilver Report on Teacher Training was that the two Roman Catholic colleges (St Joseph's and St Mary's) should amalgamate and come together with Stranmillis College and Queen's University, Belfast, to form the Belfast Centre for Teacher Education, which should be sited at Stranmillis College.

4. The Roman Catholic Church authorities mounted a vigorous and well organised campaign against this proposal on the grounds that the Catholic colleges were essential to the continuance of Catholic schooling and the proposed amalgamation and change of site would create pressure for a complete merger, leading to the extinction of separate training and ultimately of Catholic schooling generally. At an early stage in their campaign against the proposals the Church authorities also put forward a demand that the Catholic colleges' share of intakes should be increased from 25% to 40%, their argument being that if approximately 50% of the

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school population were Catholic, the Catholic colleges should have at least a 40% share of teacher training.

5. In the face of this vigorous opposition the Government decided, in Autumn 1982, to set aside the amalgamation recommendation. When this became clear to the Church authorities, the newly appointed Bishop of Down and Connor (Cathal Daly) made two important modifications to the Church's position, proposing the amalgamation of the two Catholic colleges and committing the merged college to practical co-operation with Stranmillis College so as to promote greater sharing of resources and opportunities for staff and students from the separate colleges to meet and work together.

6. There is also reference on file to a private meeting between the then Minister (Mr Scott) and Bishop Daly, although no record of the meeting can be traced. The papers suggest that Bishop Daly believed that Mr Scott had agreed that the Catholic colleges would be given a 1/3 share of intakes for 1983/84 as a new baseline from which their share would increase in later years. This was evidently a mistaken belief on the Bishop's part.

7. In December 1982, the Government published the document "Teacher Training in Northern Ireland - The Future Structure", which set out its intentions on how the rationalisation of provision would proceed. The document rejected the claim for a 40% share of intakes for the Catholic colleges and outlined a new policy with the following main components:

- course allocation based on phase (primary or secondary);
- the low demand over next few years for secondary teachers would be met mainly by universities while the colleges would have the lion's share of primary intakes to meet an expected upswing in demand;
- the colleges would have a very limited role in the training of secondary teachers, the likely future demand for specialist secondary subjects (Art, Music, Craft Design and Technology (CDT), Home Economics, Physical Education and Religious Education) being insufficient to justify more than one base. It was envisaged that the new institution about to be formed from the merger of the New University of Ulster (NUU) and the Ulster Polytechnic would play a major role in regard to the practical subjects;

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- provisional intake allocations for 1983/84.

8. In April 1983, after a short period during which comments were received on the Government's plans, DENI confirmed the intake allocations for 1983/84 (giving the Catholic colleges 32% of the total and Stranmillis the same) but decided to allow the colleges to retain CDT, Commercial Studies and RE as secondary subjects while the four remaining specialist subjects (Art, Music, Home Economics and PE) were to be the exclusive preserve of the new merged university. The Department also laid down two further requirements for the colleges:

- to reach a student/staff ratio of 10:1 by the start of the 1985/86 academic year; and
- a minimum enrolment of 10 students in each degree subject unless approval was sought and obtained otherwise.

9. Subsequently, Bishop Daly wrote repeatedly to the Minister and Secretary of State expressing extreme displeasure about the Church's claim for 40% share of intakes not being met and the curtailment of the Catholic colleges' role in the training of secondary teachers. This dispute culminated in a meeting in June 1983 with the Secretary of State, who made the following concessions:

- an open-ended review of intakes for 1984/85;
- the colleges should not be prevented from offering all specialist secondary subjects for 1983/84 only;
- responsibility for determining the secondary subjects to be taught would rest with the institutions, for 1983/84 only;
- no requirement, for 1983/84 only, to achieve minimum enrolments of 10 students per subject.

10. In a public statement, Bishop Daly presented this easement for 1983/84 as a major victory. The concession relating to the specialist secondary subjects did however draw very sharp criticism from the Vice-Chancellor-Designate of the new University of Ulster.

## Taylor Report

11. In August 1983, the Minister invited the four institutions to take part in a new forum to consider intakes for 1984/85 and wrote personally to Bishop Daly. The Bishop's acknowledgement indicated that he wished to think further on the matter but his request to be accompanied to a meeting by Bishop Edward Daly of Derry and Canon Dallat was interpreted as suggesting a measure of agreement to the new forum.

12. The other three institutions agreed to take part in the new forum and, no further response having been received from Bishop Daly, the Minister wrote again to all parties in October 1983 confirming the setting-up of a Teacher Training Allocations Advisory Committee (TAC), comprising representatives of each of the institutions, under the independent chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Hull, Dr (now Sir) William Taylor. In reply, Bishop Daly indicated that there would be no representation from the Catholic colleges on TAC as "participation would not be consistent with the principles of Catholic education". The Department proceeded to set up TAC with representation from the other three institutions only, although Dr Taylor was subsequently able to open up informal channels of communication with the Principals of the Catholic colleges.

13. In January 1984, Dr Taylor submitted his Report, which reflected unanimous agreement of the three participating institutions. It made the following recommendations in relation to the proposed intake allocations for 1984/85:

- the colleges should concentrate mainly on the training of primary teachers;
- the colleges should retain an investment in secondary training of 25 BEd places, supporting three subject groups only: CDT, Commercial Studies and Religious Studies;
- the universities should concentrate mainly on the training of secondary teachers, with the University of Ulster providing courses in the specialist secondary subjects: Art, Music, Home Economics and PE.

14. The Secretary of State accepted that the 1984/85 intake allocations should be on the lines recommended by TAC and wrote personally to Bishop Daly to inform him. The Bishop's reply expressed deep disappointment with the Catholic colleges' share of the intake allocations and the proposed restriction on

secondary provision by the colleges and reiterated the demand for:

- the renewal, sine die, of the agreement that DENI would impose no restriction on the range of subject provision in the Catholic colleges;
- a 40% share of the total 1984/85 intake quota for the Catholic colleges.

15. In a detailed reply, the Secretary of State indicated that he had reviewed the situation in the light of discussions and correspondence and had concluded that the recommended intake allocations for 1984/85 should stand. The letter (a copy of which is attached) also made the following points, the first two of which presumably comprise the "Government (Jim Prior) commitment given in the early 1980s" which Mr O'Connell described as Government acceptance of the need to support and maintain a viable teacher training college for Catholic schools:

- the Government remained committed to respecting parental rights of conscience in the education of their children;
- the Government accepted fully that Catholic parents expect the ethos of Catholic schools and teaching in moral and religious matters to be consonant with that of the home. This requires the teacher training system to produce adequate numbers of Catholic teachers for Catholic schools;
- the Catholic colleges' share of the intake allocations could not be increased because Stranmillis's share would have to be increased to match that of the Catholic colleges, leaving the universities' share reduced to 20%, which would not be sufficient to support viable courses, and because such a reduction in the role of the universities would be undesirable, as it would increase the degree of segregation in higher education, seriously damage the universities particularly the newly created University of Ulster and run counter to the general trend of teacher training throughout the UK and elsewhere;
- rejected the suggestion that the colleges should be free to determine their range of subject provision, in particular for secondary teachers, (this could not be achieved in all subjects with anything approaching a 10:1 SSR except by making unrealistic assessments of the number of students needed and would have quite unacceptable implications for

provision at other institutions);

- it would not be practical, owing to the low demand for secondary teachers in the years ahead, to spread secondary provision evenly over the colleges as well as universities, particularly in practical subjects where the small numbers involved could no longer justify so many separate bases;
- the small number of secondary places make it important that the provision made by each institution should be co-ordinated so as to match properly with the overall needs of schools. That is why it is necessary to define the particular role which each institution should discharge rather than leaving it solely to their discretion. The strengths of the colleges in CDT, Commercial Studies and Religious Studies had been recognised in line with Dr Taylor's recommendation that the Secondary BEd places should be for these subjects.

16. In reply, the Bishop wrote to the Secretary of State in very strong terms expressing dismay at the way in which Government had dealt with the Catholic interest in education. In particular, he alleged that the withdrawal or significant erosion of the rights of Catholic colleges to train secondary teachers must be regarded as a major threat to the Catholic educational system as a whole and an unacceptable shift in Government policy in respect of that system. The reply also threatened that, if Government policy continued to seek to reduce the role of the new Catholic college and to restrict its subject provision, the Church would have to regard itself as in line of direct confrontation with the Government.

17. Following a conciliatory reply from the Secretary of State, the Bishop did not respond. This was interpreted as meaning that Bishop Daly was not prepared publicly to accept the allocations to the Catholic colleges but tacitly acknowledged that no changes could be made for 1984/85.

#### Subsequent Events

18. The intake allocations for the subsequent two-year period (1985/86 and 1986/87) were considered within DENI and, in December 1984, the Secretary of State agreed to the recommended allocations, which were identical to those for 1984/85. After notification to the institutions, the only expression of disapproval came from the Principal of the Catholic colleges, who wrote to say

that the allocations fell well short of the 40% share which they requested.

19. Since then, the Department's policy on annual intake allocations has continued to be based on that recommended by Dr Taylor in the TAC Report:

- the colleges concentrate mainly on primary provision with their secondary involvement restricted to the three subjects of CDT, Business Studies and Religious Studies;
- the universities concentrate mainly on secondary provision with the University of Ulster catering for the specialist courses in Art, Music, Home Economics and PE.

20 The seven institutions which provided teacher training courses at the time of the Government's statement in 1982 on the future structure have been reduced to the current figure of four as follows:

- i. the North West College of Technology ceased to offer the Certificate in Commercial Studies course - last year of entry 1983;
- ii. the New University of Ulster and Ulster Polytechnic merged to form the University of Ulster from the start of the 1984/85 academic year;
- iii. the legal merger of the two Catholic colleges was completed in 1985, the new St Mary's College coming into existence on 1 September 1985;
- iv. QUB and Stranmillis College have continued as separate institutions.