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Summary

2. The delegation appeared genuinely grateful for the opportunity to present their case to Mr Semple and his colleagues. They set out the factors which underlay their approach to Government to assist Protestant farmers who had been displaced from the border area in Fermanagh return to their ancestral farms, and to recognise the losses which some farmers had endured, both financially and emotionally, when forced to leave their farms as a result of intimidation and, in some cases, murder. Mr Semple acknowledged their plight and listened sympathetically. He explored the nature of their proposals, and exposed the difficulty of drawing up a scheme given its potential relevance to the 50,000 other families who had been forced to move home around the same period. He undertook to report back to the Secretary of State, and to keep in touch with Mrs Foster.

Detail

3. Councillor Foster introduced the members of the delegation and invited each person in turn to tell their own story about life in the border area of Fermanagh in the early 1970's and beyond. Most had been displaced from their border farms as a result of attacks by Republican groups in the early 1970's. Most had been serving members of the UDR at the time, and had endured personal attacks and injury. Some had lost close relatives or friends. Mrs Bullock apart, all had eventually moved to safer areas inland. Some had sold their land and livestock at considerable loss, some farmed their land from a distance, others had left their land and buildings untended, or at best in conacre. All had suffered considerable loss as a result. There were others in similar positions, but the group was representative. Mr Maginnis added that dereliction, displacement and a lack of working capital were at the core of the group's problems. Where land was still owned at the border, it had deteriorated over the years. Individuals had been unable to avail of grants, most of which were not now available, because they were not living on the land.

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4. Continuing Mr Maginnis noted that FEAR's application for seed-corn funding of a research officer had taken an inordinate length of time to process and had encountered obstacles which other groups, such as the Fermanagh Prisoner Dependants Group, had not. Seed-corn funding was essential to enable FEAR to develop a package for a major funding application. Given the limited lifetime of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme, it was essential to move fast to develop such a package. However, it would be useful if the Government could give FEAR some indication of the elements of a successful package.

5. Mr Semple noted that those affected faced a range of problems, and that multiple measures would be required to address the problems they faced. However, there seemed to be two general classes of need: those who had lost out in selling up, for which some form of recognition, financial or otherwise, was required; and those who wished to receive help and support in returning to, or restoring their farms. It was difficult to conceive of a means of addressing the former, given that up to 50,000 people had been displaced across the Province in the 1970's. However, while still difficult, it might be possible to find a means of addressing the latter. But he did not wish to raise the group's hopes too much. In the meantime he would enquire about the Group's application for seed-corn funding. **[Action: Mr Maye to pursue with DOE]**

6. Mr Maginnis thanked Mr Semple for the opportunity to present the group's case. It was important for the group to know that the Government recognised the problems faced by displaced farmers in Fermanagh. The group would be happy to meet officials or Ministers at any time to answer further questions. The group did not expect to receive a large cash grant to pursue their objectives, but they did hope that seed-corn money would be forthcoming to enable a research officer to develop a meaningful application for assistance. The ultimate aim was to reintegrate displaced farmers into the border community, and to redress the victimisation they had suffered. Mr Semple undertook to report to the Secretary of State quickly, and to keep in touch with Mrs Foster.

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Next Steps

7. In the course of the next few days Mr Semple will submit a fuller report to the Secretary of State, setting out an analysis of FEAR's case, examining the options available, and outlining what the next steps might be. **[Action: Mr Ferguson to prepare a draft]**

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JWA 2809/97/4

FROM: DAVID FERGUSON
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT
20 November 1997

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
PS/Murphy (B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
NI Perm Secs
Mr Steele
Mr Thomas
Mr Watkins
Mr McNeill, DANI
Mr Maccabe
Mr Canavan
Mr Jardine
Mr Layberry ✓
Mr Todd
Mrs Brown, DOE
Mr Perry
Mr Beeton
Mr Warner

Handwritten notes:
25/11
Mr Krow
KH 25/11
to see + file
24/11
to see + file clear
26/11 Mr Miller
Please file

PS/Mr Semple

FEAR (FERMANAGH) LTD: ADDRESSING THE NEEDS

- 1. I am replying to your minute and enclosure of 11 November (not to all) asking for briefing for Mr Semple's meeting with Mr Donaldson and Mr Maguire on Friday afternoon. In doing so, I am grateful to colleagues around the system, most of whom will recognise their contribution in the material which follows.

Background

- 2. FEAR (Fear Encouraged Abandoning Roots) was established in 1996 as a non-profit making limited company. Its stated aim is "to devise programmes and projects to support victims of violence, in particular displaced families and individuals, forced to abandon their roots, with a particular emphasis but not exclusively on the border regions of Fermanagh and the Irish Republic". According to its report, its interest goes beyond the links which families may have (or have had) with particular organisations (for example, DPOA, the UDR Benevolent Fund or WAVE) to taking "a broader look at the experiences" of the families and the needs of those "displaced or forced to abandon

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roots ..." out of direct intimidation or fear. In practice, families in this context means those from the Protestant/unionist community.

The Report - Addressing the Needs of Displaced People

3. The report submitted to Mr Semple records the results of a very limited, small-scale piece of qualitative research based on a sample of 19 families, 16 of whom returned questionnaires. Of these, 14 were forced to leave their farm business, at both a financial (loss of farm and home improvement grants) and a social (loss of roots) cost; and 7 have expressed an interest in returning. Mr Semple might skim the summary on pages 3 to 6 for a flavour of the document and the passage on pages 23 and 24 for an account of the organisation's planned projects and proposed sources of funding.
4. While valid in its own terms, the report is primarily an anecdotal and somewhat sloppily presented piece of work. It would certainly not provide any sort of sound basis for establishing criteria for a Government funded compensation scheme or for deciding the amounts that might be paid, even if such a scheme were considered appropriate.

Potential Sources of Funding

5. The organisation has already sought financial assistance for its operation and the report (p.24) identifies a number of potential sources of funding for projects.
6. In the case of the former, Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust has already given a small development grant of £3k and the Fermanagh District Partnership Board is currently considering an application for a grant of £10k under the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme to employ a Research/Development Officer. In the case of projects, the attached Annex summarises the sources and the likelihood of assistance, financial or otherwise. As you will see, the possibility of resources for anything other than developmental work on the part of the organisation appears to be extremely limited, although there may be some scope for offering technical expertise and advice from DANI.

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Consideration

7. FEAR has achieved considerable publicity in the last few days, including national radio and the full slot on "Spotlight" this week. The central themes have been financial incentives to return, compensation for losses while displaced and "a symbolic gesture or recognition of [the] experiences" of the uprooted families. Coverage has been favourable and the organisation has shown better presentation skills than is usual for a Protestant community organisation. In broad terms, therefore, there is a case to be heard.

8. I understand, however, that while there may well be economic and emotional reasons why displaced families in Fermanagh would like to return to their roots, the impetus behind the initiative may be primarily political. It has provided a well-managed media platform for Arlene Foster, the up and coming Unionist solicitor from Brookeborough (who will accompany Messrs Donaldson and Maginnis); and it is more than possible that the UUP are using the issue to challenge the Republican Movement's commitment to peace and to test whether the will is there to allow the families to return. Moreover, it is equally likely that it will be added formally to the Unionists' growing list of confidence building measures, and may even be regarded by its proponents as already there following Mr Donaldson's meeting several weeks ago with the Secretary of State.

Advice

9. There is no single system of funding or compensation under current arrangements to help displaced families in the way FEAR and its supporters have in mind; and the research project does not provide any remotely sound basis on which to construct one or to begin to channel funds to the group. Even if it did, any such discrete programme of resettlement and/or compensation would be closely monitored by others and would set a precedent for other parts of the Province which would have major financial and other implications.

10. On the other hand, this is an issue of clearly symbolic significance for the Unionists and it will almost certainly feature prominently in their confidence building agenda and in

FEAR (FERMANAGH) LTD: POSSIBLE SOURCES OF FUNDING/ASSISTANCE

International Fund for Ireland

1. There would appear to be little scope for the International Fund to assist with the resettlement of the displaced families identified by FEAR. The standard IFI programmes of assistance and indeed the focus of the IFI's work are concentrated mainly on community-led regeneration initiatives and it is extremely unlikely that these could be of any practical help in assisting the individual families proposed in the FEAR paper.

The Northern Ireland Voluntary Trust

2. The Trust manages an element of the EU Peace and Reconciliation Programme which deals specifically with the inclusion of vulnerable groups, including victims of violence. There may be some scope for assistance here although much will depend on the criteria for any individual schemes.

District Partnership Boards

3. As with NIVT, District Partnership Boards are responsible for an element of the Peace and Reconciliation Programme. Specific eligibility criteria are set out at measure-level in the programme and project applications must comply with these criteria in order to be considered for funding. It is likely that funding this year will have been committed. The second tranche of funding for the years 1998 and 1999 is currently under negotiation and further applications can be considered next year.

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discussions in the wider political Talks. At the moment, however, there appears to be very little to give. With this in mind, Mr Semple might:

- (a) listen sympathetically but respond cautiously to what the delegation have to say;
- (b) enquire about the extent to which the organisation has pursued/is pursuing the sources of funding listed in its document and the responses it has been receiving;
- (c) on the particular issue of a memorial, refer to the work of Sir Kenneth Bloomfield, who will very shortly be inviting comment from a wide range of individuals and organisations across both communities;
- (d) acknowledge the plight of the displaced families, but confirm that there are currently no plans for a Government-funded resettlement or compensation scheme of the type they have in mind;
- (e) explain that any such scheme would have to be considered very carefully indeed, given its potential relevance to other parts of the Province and the major financial and other consequences of responding to other individuals and groups; and
- (f) undertake to report back to the Secretary of State on the meeting.

Conclusion

11. Chris Maccabe and I will join Mr Semple for the discussion. If he would like a brief word beforehand, perhaps you would let me know.

[Signed: DAB]

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Department of Agriculture

4. The Department is not in a position to offer grant aid. However, it would be willing to provide FEAR with technical expertise, training and the development of competencies to enable the families concerned to make a return to farming.

CRC/CCRU

5. It is doubtful whether substantive funding could be made available within the criteria for community relations programmes. FEAR is, by its nature, a Protestant group. Although the CRC might be prepared to give it some developmental assistance as a "single identity group", the ultimate objectives would need to be cross-community and development of greater mutual understanding.

Other Sources

6. It is not known who or what FLAG is. Of the Government funded sources, 2 others are perhaps worth a mention, if only to set them aside. Under the **SPED** scheme, houses bought by the Northern Ireland Housing Executive are disposed of on the open market and would have to be bid for in the normal way if owners wish to buy them back. However, any houses remaining in their owner's possession and considered unfit by the NIHE may qualify for grant-aid renovation.
7. Neither of the **criminal compensation schemes** were designed to provide assistance of the kind now sought by the displaced Fermanagh families, although they could of course have provided compensation at the time of the displacement, depending on the individual circumstances.