

200/21

DEPARTMENT FOR SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

7th Floor, Churchill House, Belfast, BT1 4SD

Unclassified

From: Mark O'Donnell
Private Office

To: Dr J Harbison
Date: 28/06/2001

Action Copy

Mr J Hunter
Mr C Radcliffe
Mr D Wall
Mr I Crozier
Mr J Johnston
Mr C Shannon

*File
Victims Strategy*

SUB/382/2001 : E (WP) (01) 48 - VICTIMS STRATEGY

The Minister has seen and read your submission of 26/06/2001 and is content.

I attach a copy of Mr Morrow's note to FM and DFM.

Many thanks.

Mark O'Donnell
Mark O'Donnell (Private Office)

Churchill House Tel: 69216

From The Minister for Social Development

Churchill House
Victoria Square
Belfast BT1 4SD

Our ref: SUB/382/2001

From: Maurice Morrow MLA
Minister for Social Development

cc: Mr Loughran
(Secretary to the
Executive Committee)

Date: 27th June 2001

Mr Hunter
Dr Harbison
Mr Johnston
Mr Crozier

First Minister

Deputy First Minister

VICTIMS STRATEGY

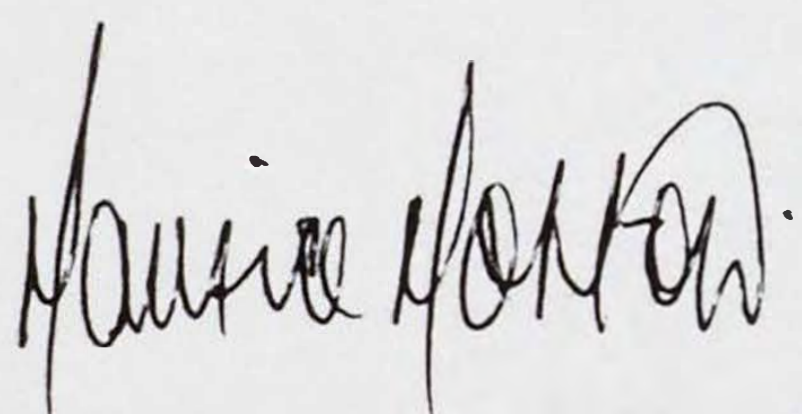
1. The above paper has been circulated and Ministers have been invited to agree that it should issue for consultation. There are several important areas where I believe amendments are required before the document could issue. Gregory Campbell has asked to associate himself with this response.
2. First of all, in relation to the proposed definition of victims (page 7, para 1.6), I believe that it is morally repugnant to suggest that the term victim should be used to cover those people who were killed, either by the security forces, or their own vile activities, whilst in the commission of acts of terrorism. Therefore, I would suggest the following definition as an alternative:

"The partners and close relatives of innocent people who have been murdered since 1969, together with all those who bear the scars, both physical and psychological, of all unlawful actions connected with the Troubles, their families and those who care for them."

This alternative, I feel, can command the support of all right-thinking people in Northern Ireland.

3. Secondly, in several places the current draft seeks to create a link between victimhood and social and economic disadvantage (paras 1.4, 12, 13 and 14). Such an assertion is both artificial and inappropriate. Whether people are poor to relatively better off, if they are victims, then they are entitled to the same help and assistance as everyone else. Over the past 32 years, people have been murdered because of their religion, their politics, their job or just because they were in the wrong place at the wrong time. They were not singled out on account of their bank balance. Therefore, any attempt to tie the allocation of victims' resources to TSN will lead to a very severe inequality against people who have every right to be classified as victims. For example, farmers in Fermanagh who were murdered or who had their sons murdered, would not score well on standard deprivation indicators, nevertheless, they are victims and have the right to support.
4. Consistent with this approach, I would propose the removal of the reference to new TSN in para 1.4 and the deletion of paras 12-14, which deal with small businesses and rates rebate. In any case, the inclusion of these points on a list of targets to deal with victims' issues is likely to give rise to charges that the question of victims is being trivialised by padding the document with things that are entirely irrelevant.
5. In addition, I would submit that para 17 requires amendment to make it explicit that the memorials mentioned are memorials *to victims*, not terrorists. I would also urge caution in relation to para 15. The concept of a physical memorial to the innocent victims of the Troubles is an excellent one, however any project which attempts to provide an exhaustive list is likely to be fraught with difficulty (in fact the book *Lost Lives* is not wholly accurate).

6. I would note a number of further comments. It is important that the strategy that emerges from the consultation is integrated across Departments and sectors and aims to assist victims to address and move on from the problems they have encountered. Integration into the strategy between Government and Voluntary and Community Sector will be central in this regard. The consultation document rightly references the Compact but I would also ask you to note that “Partners for Change – Government Strategy for Support of the Voluntary & Community Sector” could also provide a mechanism for enhancing an integrated approach. Consultation about “Partners for Change” will take place over the next 4 months; the need for a strategic approach to victims could emerge as a crosscutting theme to be reflected in all Departmental strategies for the support of the voluntary and community sector.
7. Finally, I note that the document identifies work of both the Victims Liaison Unit in the NIO and the Victims Unit in OFM/DFM and the process used to ensure communication across the Departments. This process could be further enhanced by the 2 Units working to produce a joint plan of activity that clearly links the activities of the separate Departments in the context of the broader strategy.



MAURICE MORROW MLA
Minister for Social Development