

Race strategy file

James please ask K
for another copy of
condoc
- live

Ken Fraser

05/11/02 15:10

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Subject: RACE CRIME/SECTARIAN CRIME CONSULTATION LAUNCH

Mary, Gerry, Jeff cc Chris, Michael, Jim

Michael, Jim and I attended the Ministerial launch of the consultation at the Indian Community Centre. Precious few others did - there must've been no more than half a dozen "outsiders" (of the 40-50 invited by the NIO), although TV cameras were present.

The Minister, in a very short speech, gave good value to Race Equality Strategy - saying that he was "determined that work will continue on [it]" and that he hoped to consult on it "soon" (he also said this of the Community Relations Strategy). He had only two questions - about the length of consultation (4 months - "longer than usual to take account of the fact that the consultation involves people whose first language may not be English") and about the fact that it was just Race and Sectarianism, not Violence Against Women and Homophobic Violence (he spoke about recognising the issues and keeping an eye on them, but that the consultation was concerned with "fulfilling commitments" on Race and Sectarianism).

I have passed to you copies of the condoc. The amendments made from the draft we had seen are minimalist, rather than what we had proposed to NIO - unsurprising. Below is the extract from the press notice recording what the Minister will be recorded as having said.

Happy to answer any questions you may have on this.

Ken

Help Stamp Out Racism And Sectarianism - Browne

Northern Ireland Office Minister, Des Browne MP, has said that racist and sectarian crime poses a serious threat to the development of a stable society.

The Minister was speaking today at the Indian Community Centre in Belfast as the Government published a consultation paper on Race Crime and Sectarian Crime Legislation in Northern Ireland.

He urged everyone to make their views known during the four month consultation period, which runs until next February.

Des Browne said:

"Crime motivated by hate is abhorrent and damages not only the victim but also the community as a whole.

give mine
to Chris
Stewart

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"The Government is committed to eradicating all forms of intolerance from society and have promised to use the criminal law to deal with such manifestations of hatred, whether based on racism or sectarianism.

"It is vital that this legislation should adequately protect vulnerable groups in society and the consultation paper, published today, suggests four options for change.

"The paper looks at legislating in respect of sentencing and also legislation to create offences which are aggravated by both racism and sectarianism, sending a signal that society is not prepared to tolerate racist and sectarian crime."

"I urge all of you, who have already shown your commitment in the developing of these options for change and who are expressing your continued commitment to help make a difference by considering these questions and options thoughtfully and carefully."