

From: Jo O'Reilly
Security Vetting Review

11 December 2004

cc. See Distribution List Below

Note for the record

MEETING WITH THE LOYALIST COMMISSION, THURSDAY 10 DECEMBER 2004.

Summary

- A fairly relaxed and useful meeting advising on the current work and achievements of the Security Vetting Review;
- Lengthy discussion on the effects of the 'the sins of the parents' on young people from the loyalist community applying for jobs with the MOD - especially in the light of both the current political process and focus on 'moving forward';
- Agreed the need for confidence building measures around the existing vetting process and application.

Christine Collins and I met with the Rev. Mervyn Gibson. Christine Collins opened the meeting by providing a detailed historical account of the vetting process and the need to have national security vetting in place. She described the recent changes to the system arising out of the current Review, focusing mainly on the recruitment processes and the reduced number of posts requiring vetting within the NICS.

2. Rev. Gibson spoke of the Protestant communities' ongoing concern with job applications to the MOD and Shorts. Young people, who wanted to follow the traditional career in the Armed Forces, Shorts etc. were being turned down for posts on the grounds of national security stemming from the sins of their parents [this issue of discrimination against ex-prisoners' families was raised in a meeting with the Minister before the summer]. Morale was already low in the community as many felt that under Patten and the current 50/50 arrangements the avenue of a career within PSNI was already closed to them. Rev. Gibson recognised that crimes had been committed but sentences had been served and in some cases family members did not even share the same views. He provided two examples of where jobs had been refused to the children of ex-prisoners; and in these examples the families' concerned had ensured that their children had no involvement in any paramilitary activity. Most of the individuals concerned were actually active in bringing about change. Rev. Gibson felt that with the peace process and the move forward, the level of threat had changed, and would continue to change, and that the government must move in accordance with it. Christine agreed that this indeed was important and that the vetting process in this particular area would need to shift along with changes in threat or risk. She went on to provide detail of the actual vetting application form emphasising the importance of an 'honest' application - as this was one tool used in

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helping employing organisations determine the risk and threat.

3. Rev Gibson stated that there is a fear by young people that, if they ticked the box in the vetting application and provided detail of parent's past criminal behaviour, they would not get the job. Also there was a fear that what individual had stated could be used in evidence against family members. There was much need to build confidence that an honest completion of the vetting application would merit at least an opportunity to discuss further in interview with the applicant before any employment decision was taken. Christine agreed that a move in this would be desirable and advised that she would feed this point to the relevant vetting authority.

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