

File NIAC-Reconciliation

05-15-04/15

FROM: DAVID COLEMAN
DEVOLUTION AND LEGISLATION DIVISION
4 NOVEMBER 2004

SECRETARY OF STATE (L&B)

cc see distribution below

**NORTHERN IRELAND AFFAIRS COMMITTEE: NEW INQUIRY ON
RECONCILIATION: WAYS OF DEALING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND'S
PAST**

Issue: New NIAC inquiry on Reconciliation.

Timing: The Government is expected to issue a memorandum to the NIAC within 8 weeks.

Presentational Issues: There is likely to be some media interest.

Recommendation: You note the terms of reference for the inquiry.

Background:

Attached at **Annex A** is a copy of a Press Notice released today announcing the setting up of a new NIAC inquiry into "Reconciliation: Ways of Dealing with Northern Ireland's Past". The purpose of the inquiry is "to seek out and illuminate ways which have been used to help resolve similar conflicts elsewhere, and which could assist the process of healing in Northern Ireland". The Press Notice emphasises that the aim is not to arrive at a narrow and prescriptive set of recommendations but rather by illuminating successful approaches elsewhere make appositive contribution to heal divisions which have beset Northern Ireland society over the past 30 years.

2) The Committee aims to start this inquiry in December with the intention of completing it by February/March 2005. They will of course invite Ministers to give evidence in due course. We can consider nearer the time who is best placed to lead. The Government's is also expected to submit a formal memorandum to the Committee by **Friday 3 December**. RIR division will take the lead in preparing this.

David Coleman

David Coleman
MB ext 6576

John Spellar

ANNEX A: PRESS RELEASE

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Sessions 2003-2004

4 November 2004

NEW INQUIRY

RECONCILIATION: WAYS OF DEALING WITH
NORTHERN IRELAND'S PAST

The Committee has decided to conduct an inquiry into possible ways of dealing with Northern Ireland's past. It therefore proposes to examine:

The experience of efforts in other jurisdictions to move forward from a history of division and conflict, on a basis as widely acceptable as possible to affected communities and individuals who have suffered from violence.

The Committee may also choose to examine associated issues which arise in the course of the inquiry.

The Rt Hon Michael Mates MP, Chairman of the Committee, explained the intention of the Committee:

"In May the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland announced that he was embarking on a programme of discussions about how Northern Ireland could find 'ways of dealing with the past which recognise the pain, grief and anger associated with it' but which 'enables it to build a better future for the next generation'. The Committee wholeheartedly welcomes this initiative.

"The purpose of the inquiry we have announced today is to seek out and illuminate ways which have been used to help resolve similar conflicts elsewhere, and which could assist the process of healing society in Northern Ireland. Our intention is not to arrive at a narrow and prescriptive set of recommendations. Rather, by identifying approaches which have had success elsewhere, we hope to make a positive contribution to the desire of the overwhelming majority of the people of Northern Ireland to seek ways of easing the hurt of the last 30 years."

Ian Pearson
Barry Gardiner
Angela Smith
Joe Pilling
Jonathan Phillips
Robert Hannigan
Stephen Leach
Nick Perry
Chris Maccabe
Mark Sweeney
Jonathan Margetts
Sarah Todd
Clare Salters
Owen Smith
Mary Bunting, OFMDFM
Tina Gamble, OFMDFM

ANNEX A: PRESS RELEASE

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Session 2003-2004

4 November 2004

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The Committee wishes to invite any individual or organisation with an interest in this matter to submit written evidence. This should be addressed to the Clerk of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee, 7 Millbank, House of Commons, London SW1P 3JA and should arrive as soon as possible and in any case no later than 10.00 am on Friday, 3 December 2004.

Individuals or organisations are requested to submit memoranda (guideline length up to six A4 pages) in a Word file on computer disk or by e-mail to northircom@parliament.uk with a single additional hard copy in the post; those without access to a computer are respectfully requested to take particular care that submissions are legible. Memoranda submitted to the Committee should be kept confidential until published by the Committee.

