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Friday, January 30, 2009

Government to reflect carefully on Eames-Bradley, says Martin

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GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

THE GOVERNMENT will reflect on the Eames-Bradley report on dealing with the past before deciding on the way forward, Minister for Foreign Affairs Micheál Martin said in Belfast yesterday.

Amid continuing controversy over the report and a DUP Assembly motion condemning the £12,000 proposed payment to the families of everyone killed in the Troubles, Mr Martin appealed for people to reflect carefully on the full contents of Eames-Bradley.

He said he was not surprised at some of the response to the proposed £12,000 "recognition payment" notwithstanding that a similar €15,000 payment in the Republic generated little or no controversy. "I don't think it is surprising that families are going to react in certain ways to proposals of this kind," he said.

"The pity though is that that one proposal has masked some of the most substantive proposals, such as the legacy commission . . . It is a pity that the rest of the report has been overshadowed by the controversy surrounding the payments issue," said Mr Martin.

Mr Martin met community groups in Belfast, including members of the Ballymurphy group campaigning for justice for the 11 people killed by the British army in west Belfast in August 1971.

Meanwhile, the DUP has tabled a motion for Monday's Assembly meeting condemning the Eames-Bradley proposals "which equate perpetrators of violence with innocent victims".

British Labour MP Frank Field has also stated that he will oppose in the House of Commons any attempt to allow the £12,000 payment. Mr Field said that "under no circumstances should taxpayers' money go to families of . . . terrorists who murdered innocent victims on the mainland or in Northern Ireland".

This article appears in the print edition of the Irish Times

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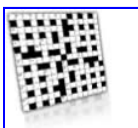
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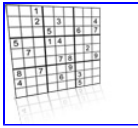
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