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FROM: ALLEN McVEIGH  
POLITICAL AFFAIRS DIVISION  
26 September 1997

ASST/  
SEC 27019  
30 SEP 1997  
C.C.R.U.

DESK IMMEDIATE

- cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
- PS/Mr Murphy (B&L)
- PS/Mr Ingram (B&L)
- PS/Mr Worthington (DENI&L)
- PS/PUS (B&L)
- PS/Sir David Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Steele
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Hill
- Mr Lavery
- Mr Caravan 20.9
- Mr Woods
- Mr McAleer
- Ms Campbell, DED
- Mr Burgess
- Mrs Heaney

PA 124/95

*Mr Carson*

- 1. Mr Crawford [RC 26/9]
- 2. PS/Mr Worthington (DHSS)

**NI WOMEN' POLITICAL FORUM: CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SECTARIANISM ON SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER 1997**

I am most grateful that Mr Worthington has agreed, given the unavailability of the Secretary of State, to open the NI Women's Political Forum (NIWPF) Conference on Anti-Sectarianism to be held at Hillsborough Castle between 10.00 am and 4.30 pm tomorrow.

2. The NIWPF is an umbrella group for women in the various political parties (and none), which is seeking to broaden its support and to encourage more women into NI politics. They are aware that the Minister's other commitments minimise the time that he can spend with them and are content that he will be able only to welcome the participants and formally open the Conference.

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3. An outline Conference agenda is attached - Annex A. I am advised that there has been no difficulty filling the maximum number of participants allowed by Hillsborough's confines (120). The Minister's 'welcome' slot has been agreed for 11.00 am, to allow time to get all the participants into the Castle and to have coffee, etc, and should last no longer than 10 or 15 minutes. Some draft brief speaking notes are attached - Annex B. A short press release cleared with Information Services is also attached - Annex C. Finally, I attach - Annex D, for information only, a copy of the NIWPF's draft Constitution which was recently forwarded to me.

11.00 am

Welcome and Conference Open by Mr Worthington

4. The Minister may also wish to note that on this occasion invitations did **not** issue to Sinn Fein because of reservations from the Loyalist parties, although it remains the intention of the NIWPF organising committee not to delay any longer than necessary an invitation to Sinn Fein women to join. Against that, I am advised that, for the first time, women from the UUP will be present. Some women from the media have been invited to participate in the Conference and the organisers will be inviting the press to cover the event, to which we have no objection.

12.15 pm - 1.30 pm Lunch

5. I will be attending the Conference and a member of the Information Service will be on hand during the Minister's opening remarks. I trust that these arrangements are satisfactory.

Chair: Marian Donnelly, Workers' Party

*Allen McVeigh*

Reports (10)

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Open discussion

4.30 pm

Conclusion/close: Patricia Lewley, SDLP

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**ANNEX A**

**NIWPF SEMINAR ON ANTI- SECTARIANISM  
ON SATURDAY 27 SEPTEMBER**

10.00 am - 10.45 am Registration, tea/coffee

Chair: Lily Kerr, Workers' Party

10.45 am Margaret Marshall, Alliance Party: History of NIWPF

11.00 am Welcome and Conference Open by Mr Worthington

11.15 am

Papers from:

UDP (Norma Coulter)

PUP (Patsy Lavery)

Alliance Party (Gerry Rice)

SDLP (Marietta Farrell)

NIWC (Ann McCann)

Workers' Party (Frances McCarthy)

12.10 pm Lily McIlwaine, UDP: close morning session

12.15 pm - 1.30 pm Lunch

1.30 pm - 2.30 pm Workshops (10)

2.30 pm - 2.40 pm Break

Chair: Marian Donnelly, Workers' Party

2.40 pm Reports (10)

3.30 pm Open discussion

4.20 pm Conclusion/close: Patricia Lewsley, SDLP

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**C O N F I D E N T I A L**

**ANNEX B**

**DRAFT SPEAKING NOTES FOR MR WORTHINGTON TO OPEN THE  
NIWPF CONFERENCE ON ANTI-SECTARIANISM**

First, may I extend a very warm welcome to Hillsborough Castle to you all .

As you know, the Secretary of State had hoped to be with you this morning but, unfortunately, her diary does not now permit her to come along. She has asked me to pass on her apologies to you all. I should also mention that my own diary commitments mean I can only stay briefly with you. However, both the Secretary of State and myself look forward to receiving a report of the proceedings in due course.

I wish to congratulate you on two counts. First as a body of women active in NI politics from a wide cross-spectrum of political parties, and second, for choosing to look today in depth at sectarianism and how that might be tackled. Everyone has their part to play, and that includes the Government, in eradicating this from NI society.

For those of you here on your first visit, I should say that Hillsborough Castle is also a Royal residence. The decor and furnishings therefore reflect that and the history of the building. I trust that no-one will take any offence from the surroundings nor indeed from my mentioning this fact to you this morning.

Cathy Heaney, the Castle Administrator, and her staff will, I know, look after you well during your stay. May I conclude by wishing you an interesting and productive Conference and say how much I appreciate your efforts to find a solution to the problem of sectarianism in Northern Ireland.

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**C O N F I D E N T I A L**

**ANNEX C**

**DRAFT PRESS RELEASE**

**27 September 1997**

The Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Mr Tony Worthington MP, today welcomed up to 120 delegates from the Northern Ireland Women's Political Forum to Hillsborough Castle, the venue for a Conference on Anti-Sectarianism.

In opening the Women's Political Forum Conference, Mr Worthington congratulated the participants in tackling this thorny issue and hoped their deliberations would help to better inform efforts to combat sectarianism both at an individual level and among the political parties the participants represented.

A number of spokeswomen delivered papers on the subject in the morning and the afternoon was given over to workshops and an open discussion, on how sectarianism might be tackled.

**NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. The Northern Ireland Women's Political Forum (NIWPF) is an umbrella group for women from various political parties across the political spectrum and who are affiliated to the forum.

2. For further details on the NIWPF, contact either Eilish Duffy on Belfast 328663/326852 or Margaret Marshall on Belfast 701537.

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**DRAFT CONSTITUTION FOR THE NIWP F**

1. There shall be a Northern Ireland Women's Political Forum established and known hereafter as the NIWPF.
  - 1.1. The Women's Political Forum shall act as an umbrella group for women in the various political parties.
2. **Aims and objectives**
  - 2.1. To raise the political consciousness of women.
  - 2.2. To highlight women within politics.
  - 2.3. To foster good relations between women of the various political parties.
  - 2.4. To achieve the maximum degree of co-operation on all political issues between the various parties.
  - 2.5. To give expression to issues which impact upon women such as social, economic and equality issues.
  - 2.6. To empower women within their individual parties by the exchange of information, the giving of support and boosting confidence.
  - 2.7. To devise such programmes of work which enable women within the community to understand the political process and structures.
3. **Structure of the NIWP F**
  - 3.1. The forum shall comprise of women nominated from the individual parties affiliated.
  - 3.2. Each party shall be entitled to a maximum of 4 representatives from each constituent party.
  - 3.3. The forum will consist of the following officerships:
    - a) A Chair on a rotating 3 monthly basis
    - b) A co-ordinator
    - c) Minute secretary
    - d) Press officers
    - e) Treasurers (2)
  - 3.4. No one party shall hold more than one of the above officerships.

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- 3.5. No one individual shall hold an officership for more than an continuous period of 2 years.
- 3.6. The forum shall hold an Annual General Meeting at which it shall appoint its officers for the coming year.
- 3.7. The forum shall meet on a monthly basis.
- 3.8. There shall be provision for the holding of additional meetings as required.
- 3.9. The quorum for a meeting shall be no less than 5 parties present.

### 4. Sub-Committees

- 4.1. There shall be provision for a number of sub-committees to deal with the following:
  - a) Fund raising
  - b) Organisation of seminars, conferences, etc
  - c) To formulate programmes of work for the forum
  - d) Public relations.
- 4.2. All recommendations of the sub-committees are subject to ratification by the forum.

### 5. Affiliation to the NIWPF

- 5.1. Parties wishing to affiliate should apply in writing to the forum.
- 5.2. Affiliation to the forum is open to those parties willing to participate in the democratic process, who are committed entirely to peaceful means, and those who are willing to condemn the use of violence to achieve a political solution/settlement.
- 5.3. Affiliation to the forum will not diminish the individual rights of parties as autonomous, political entities.

### 6. Changes to Constitution

- 6.1. Any party seeking changes to the constitution can do so by giving one month's written notice.
- 6.2. Any change will require a majority of two-thirds of all the affiliated parties.

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