

**From: RAJ MANGAT  
IPL  
16 FEBRUARY 2000**



cc. Miss Neill  
(w/o attachments)

Mr T Smyth  
Ms C Murray  
Mr T Watson  
Ms Mersey  
Mr A Paul  
Ms Wood

*Rec'd  
Assembly Section  
JK  
18/2/00*

**NORTHERN IRELAND: BULL POINTS**

Please find attached a copy of the Northern Ireland section of the FCO's latest Bull Points document for updating.

2. The FCO circulate this document to posts abroad where its main purpose is to supply Information Officers with an up-to-date quarry of speeches and answers to letters which they can draw.

3. Since the last update, there have been further changes in the political situation in Northern Ireland. Therefore, I would be grateful if you could **edit or rewrite** the relevant section to reflect the **essential points only**. Please send the pages relating to your division with **amendments typed in bold**. For those on the OASIS network, please could you type amendments in the **Bookman Old Style font, 12**.

4. I would appreciate any comments/amendments to be forwarded to me by mid-day **23 February 2000**.

Thank you.

Raj Mangat

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# NORTHERN IRELAND BULL POINTS

## POLITICAL PROGRESS

- With the establishment of a new devolved administration on 2 December, power is now back in the hands of Northern Ireland politicians for the first time in 25 years.
- A devolved Executive, representative of the whole community has set about tackling the issues which people care about: health care, education, environment and jobs.
- It's still early days, but the signs are encouraging and examples of normal politics are beginning to emerge.
- Politics are no longer dominated by the constitutional issue.
- Ministers in the eleven devolved Departments are already experiencing the opportunities and challenges of taking real responsibility.

## STRANDS TWO AND THREE

- On 2 December 1999, after the devolution of power to the Northern Ireland Assembly, Peter Mandelson, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and David Andrews, the Irish Minister for Foreign Affairs, met in Dublin and exchanged letters to bring into effect the British-Irish Agreement (a treaty that gives effect to the international aspects of the Belfast Agreement).
- As well as making changes to Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish constitution (removing the territorial claim to Northern Ireland) the Treaty established the North-South Ministerial Council, the British-Irish Council and the British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference.

## North-South Ministerial Council

D. Brown

- The first meeting of the NSMC was held in Armagh on 13 December 1999. It was attended by the Irish Cabinet, the Northern Ireland First and Deputy First Ministers and 8 other members of the Northern Ireland Executive.
- Six Implementation Bodies were established and six further areas for cross-border co-operation (using existing bodies) were identified. Work on these and other areas will be taken forward at sectoral level between full meetings of the NSMC.

## **British-Irish Council**

D. Brown

- The British-Irish Council (BIC) is a forum for its members to exchange information, discuss and consult and endeavour to reach agreement on co-operation on matters of mutual interest.
- The first meeting of the BIC was held in London on 17 December 1999. It was attended by members of all the devolved administrations within the UK and representatives of the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man as well as the British and Irish Governments.
- At the meeting working procedures were agreed and an initial list of issues for discussion was adopted. These issues include Drugs, Social Inclusion, Environment, Transport and the Knowledge Economy. Other areas suitable for discussion were also identified.
- The next meeting will be held in Dublin in June 2000 and will focus on the issue of drugs.

## **British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference**

- The British-Irish Inter-Governmental Conference (BIIGC) brings together the British and Irish Governments to promote bilateral co-operation on matters of mutual interest, including non-devolved Northern Ireland matters.
- The first meeting of the BIIGC was held in London on 17 December 1999 and was attended by members of the British and Irish Governments and the First and Deputy First Ministers of the Northern Ireland Executive.
- A Memorandum of Understanding on procedural arrangements was agreed and a programme of work was adopted. The Conference will take forward work on such diverse areas as Immigration, Organised Crime, Social Security (including fraud detection), Fiscal Issues and Broadcasting, and in relation to Northern Ireland, Security (normalisation and cross-border co-operation), Rights, Policing, Criminal Justice, Prisons and Victims issues.

## **Constitutional Issues**

- These are now agreed and settled on the basis of consent.
- Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution have been changed.
- The Government of Ireland Act 1920 has been repealed.

## **Implementing the Agreement**

- Real and continuing positive progress is being made on all areas of the Agreement.
- A security strategy paper was published by the Government on 22 December reflecting its desire to see security normalisation occur. The paper commissioned a review of security facilities and installations; this will be completed within the next few weeks.
- On 19 January the Government responded to the Patten Report on the future of policing in Northern Ireland by accepting many of its recommendations including those on the size, composition and name of the force.
- Paramilitary organisations have appointed authorised representatives to discuss the modalities of decommissioning.
- An interim report was published on 10 December by the International Independent Commission on Decommissioning reflecting progress made against the new political context which now provided a basis for an assessment that decommissioning will occur.
- Prisoner releases continue.
- The report of the review into Criminal Justice is being finalised. It is hoped that this will be published in late February.

## **Parliamentary Issues**

- The Government has published legislation to allow MPs and Members of the Assembly to hold seats in the Irish Dail at the same time.
- This reflects the special relationship within the British Isles and recognises the important part played by the Irish Government in securing the successful establishment of the new devolved administration and the coming into force of the British Irish Agreement.
- Members will not be able to take up Ministerial office in the Assembly if they are already an Irish Government Minister and will cease to hold office in the Assembly on becoming an Irish Government Minister.

## **Decommissioning**

- All parties agree that:

Decommissioning is an essential part of the process;

It should happen as soon as possible;

It is for the Independent Commission to take forward in its discussions with the authorised representatives.

- It is for the Commission to determine the details of decommissioning – methods, timing, verification – within the requirements of the Agreement.
- The Commission's December report stated that the timing of a start was best agreed in discussions with the paramilitary representatives but, if necessary, the Commission would specify a date by which decommissioning would start.
- The Commission's next report will be of great importance; expect to see signs of further and continuing progress
- If there is a default on decommissioning or devolution, both Governments agree that the operation of the political institutions must be suspended immediately.

### **Rights, Safeguards and Equality of Opportunity**

*Tony Carawan*

- All parties affirmed their commitment to the mutual respect, the civil rights and religious liberties of everyone in the community. The British Government will complete incorporation into Northern Ireland law of the European Convention on Human Rights, including the power for the courts to overrule Assembly legislation when inconsistent with it.
- The Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission, established on 1 March 1999, will advise on the scope for defining, in Westminster legislation, rights supplementary to those in the ECHR to reflect the particular circumstances of Northern Ireland. It will also keep under review the adequacy and effectiveness in Northern Ireland of laws and proposed Assembly legislation.
- The Irish Government will strengthen further the protection of Human Rights in its jurisdiction and ensure that at least an equivalent level of protection of human rights as will pertain in Northern Ireland including the establishment of a Human Rights Commission equivalent to that within Northern Ireland.
- A Joint Committee of representatives of the two Human Rights Commissions is envisaged as a forum for considering human rights issues in the island of Ireland.
- A legal duty is being placed on public bodies, in carrying out their functions, to take due regard for equality of opportunity. The new Equality Commission will monitor and enforce this as well as bringing together the previously separate bodies with responsibilities on religious, gender, racial and disability discrimination.

All Depts

## **Economic, Social and Cultural Issues**

The British Government continues to pursue policies to sustain economic stability and reduce social exclusion, pending devolution of powers to a new Northern Ireland Assembly.

The Government will <sup>continue to</sup> make rapid progress with:

- a new regional development strategy;
- a new economic development strategy; and
- further measures on employment equality.

The Government will also take action to promote the Irish language.

- On 10 April 1998 the two Governments signed the new British-Irish Agreement embodying understandings on constitutional issues and affirming their commitment to support and to implement the Agreement.

## **Victims of Violence**

- In supporting the Agreement, all parties believe that it is essential to acknowledge and address the suffering of victims of violence as a necessary element of reconciliation. They recognise that victims have a right to remember as well as to contribute to a changed society; the achievement of a peaceful and just society would be the true memorial to the victims of violence.

## **Decommissioning**

- The Agreement committed all participants to the total disarmament of all paramilitary organisations.
- The participants also confirmed their intention to continue to work constructively and in good faith with the Independent Commission and to use any influence they may have to achieve the decommissioning of all paramilitary arms within 2 years of the Referendum in May 1998 and in the context of the implementation of the overall settlement.
- The Independent Commission will monitor, review and verify progress on decommissioning and will report regularly to both Governments.
- Both Governments have agreed to take all necessary steps to facilitate the decommissioning process.
- The IRA and UFF have appointed authorised representatives to meet the Independent International Decommissioning Commission. Initial meetings have taken place.

Further discussions continue and the Commission is due to report on progress later this month.

### **Policing & Justice**

- The Agreement provides the opportunity for a new beginning with a police service capable of attracting and sustaining the support of the whole community.
- A seven strong Independent Policing Commission was established to make recommendations for future policing arrangements in Northern Ireland. The Commission, which was broadly representative of the community in Northern Ireland and had expert and international representation among its membership, consulted widely and published its report on 9 September 1999.
- A parallel wide-ranging review of the criminal justice system is being carried out by the British Government, through a mechanism with an independent element, in consultation with political parties and others. It is anticipated that widespread consultation will take place with findings being reported by Autumn 1999. The Review Group published a Progress Report on 15 April.
- The Implementation of recommendations from both reviews will be discussed with political parties and Irish Government. The British Government remains ready, in principle, to devolve appropriate responsibilities for policing and justice issues in due course.

### **Prisoners**

- Both Governments have put in place mechanisms to provide for an accelerated programme for the release of prisoners. The British Government has established a Sentence Review Commission which will take account of the seriousness of the offences for which the person was convicted, and the need to protect the community. The first releases under the Commission's remit took place in the week commencing 7 September 1998.
- Should the circumstances allow it any qualifying prisoners who remained in custody two years after the commencement of the scheme would be released at that point.
- Prisoners affiliated to organisations which have not established or are not maintaining a complete and unequivocal cease-fire will not benefit from these arrangements.

### **GENERAL**

#### **Security Situation**

- The current security situation is quiet but tense following the recent murder of Richard Jameson in Portadown. Mr Jameson was shot four or five times outside his

home in Portadown by at least one gunman. One person has been charged in connection with the murder. Police are continuing their investigations. During the month there have also been a number of isolated petrol bomb, pipe bomb and arson attacks and acts of intimidation.

- During 1999 there were 206 paramilitary style attacks, 138 by Loyalists and 68 by Republicans. So far this year there have been 7, all attributed to loyalists.

### **Normalisation Measures**

- In the Belfast Agreement, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to the normalisation of security arrangements in Northern Ireland as quickly as the threat allows. We want an early and complete return to the arrangements which apply in a normal peaceful society; to a situation where there is no further need for Northern Ireland-specific counter-terrorist measures and security installations or for soldiers to patrol in support of the police. We want to see policing structures and arrangements which have widespread community support.
- Major progress has already been made. Since the Belfast Agreement, routine military patrolling has been reduced by two thirds. Three battalions have returned to Great Britain. There are now under 15,000 service personnel on operational duties in Northern Ireland, fewer than at any time since 1970, although there may be short term increases to guarantee full support to the RUC over periods of heightened tension. In large parts of the Province, the police patrol without any military assistance. Since April 1998 11 military bases have been demolished and a further 7 installations have been closed.
- Further steps the Government intends to take towards normalising security are set out in its Security Strategy paper which was published on 22 December 1999. However, the government has a duty to protect the community from the threat of violence from whatever quarter and in whatever form it may come. Any changes must be balanced against the threat posed from groups opposed to the Good Friday Agreement.

### **Parades**

- The Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Bill received Royal Assent on 16 February 1998, establishing the Parades Commission.
- The legislation gives the Commission responsibility for making decisions on parades (taking over the role of the RUC in this respect), in addition to its mediatory and educational role.
- The new legislation gives the Commission power to replace conditions on a parade, taking into account a range of factors, including a new criterion of "impact on relationships within the community". But it is important to understand that the

Commission's additional powers represent a final stage in the process, where local accommodation cannot be achieved.

- The central aim of the Public Processions (Northern Ireland) Act is to facilitate local agreement on contentious parades, and create the conditions in which the Commission's power to make determinations need not be used. The Chairman has made it clear that he does not see the Commission's role as curbing the right to march.
- Her Majesty's Government is committed to preserving the civil rights of all citizens as shown by our commitment to incorporate the ECHR into domestic legislation. Our principle is equal treatment for both sides of the community.
- Last year's marching season was one of the quietest for some years with organisers of the various parades having abided by the determinations issued by the Parades Commission. The annual loyal order July parades passed off more peacefully than in previous years.
- Attempts to find an accommodation between the Bogside Residents Coalition and the Londonderry Apprentice Boys over the route taken by last August's Apprentice Boys parade broke down at the last moment. There were a number of incidents of rioting after the main August parade in Londonderry, with the destruction of various buildings including shop premises. The estimate of the cost of the damage is approximately £4.2m.
- The decision of the organisers to reschedule the date of the controversial Annual Shutting of the Gates Parade from 18 December to 4 December following a plea from the City's traders shows that with goodwill and common sense accommodation is possible. Attempts continue at finding a resolution to the Parades issue by encouraging dialogue between the local communities.
- Efforts **also** continue to try and find a satisfactory compromise to the annual Drumcree Church parade.

## **BLOODY SUNDAY INQUIRY**

### *General points on the Inquiry*

When announcing the establishment of the new Inquiry in January 1998, the Prime Minister reassured the House of Commons that its aim would not be to accuse individuals or institutions, nor to invite fresh recrimination, but to establish the truth about what happened on that day, so far as it could 26 years on. The Prime Minister stated that the Inquiry would be wholly independent of the Government, though he pledged that the Government would give the Inquiry its full support.

The Inquiry has the powers of the High Court and is independent of Government. How the Inquiry operates is for the Inquiry (and ultimately the courts) to decide and it is not for the Government to interfere.

The main hearings will commence in March 2000.

In December 1998 the Inquiry decided that all soldiers would have their full names disclosed apart from those who opened fire who would have only their surnames disclosed.

This ruling was the subject of a successful judicial review launched by the soldiers' lawyers and supported by the Ministry of Defence. The High Court ordered the Inquiry to reconsider its decision. The Ministry of Defence's assistance was sought by the Inquiry and the Ministry of Defence submitted abundant material in support of the soldiers' claim for anonymity.

The Inquiry announced its second decision in May; but this time all soldiers would be required to disclose their full names unless there were special reasons why they should not be identified.

This decision was also judicially reviewed and once again the Ministry of Defence gave the soldiers' case unequivocal support. On 17 June 1999 the High Court, in a majority decision, quashed the Inquiry's ruling in certain respects and found in favour of the soldiers who were seeking anonymity. The Inquiry's lawyers were given leave to appeal and decided to do so.

On 28 July 1999 the Court of Appeal unanimously dismissed the Inquiry's appeal and found in favour of the soldiers who were seeking anonymity. The Inquiry decided not to seek leave to appeal to the House of Lords against the Court of Appeal's judgement.

After a hearing of the Inquiry in Londonderry in late September 1999 it was decided that anonymity should be extended beyond those who opened fire to all soldiers present on Bloody Sunday.

The Government is both committed to the objective of finding out the truth about Bloody Sunday and sympathetic to the soldiers' concerns about their personal safety. The Ministry of Defence, acting as the soldiers' former employer and fulfilling its duty of care to them, has unequivocally supported their arguments in favour of anonymity.

### **"The Disappeared" legislation**

- On 27 April 1999 the British and Irish Governments signed an agreement establishing a Commission to help recover the remains of "The Disappeared".

### **Patrick Finucane**

- Patrick Finucane, a Belfast solicitor, was murdered by loyalist terrorists on 10 February 1989. Since then there have been numerous allegations about him being targeted by the security forces, which were fuelled during the court hearing that convicted Brian Nelson.

There have been certain allegations made against the security forces in relation to the murder; likewise, we are determined to ensure that all the allegations are fully and fairly investigated, and are seen to be so.

- The Government has not ruled out any course of action in this case. A further police inquiry was announced on 28 April 1999 into the murder and related issues, and a person has been charged with the murder of Mr Finucane. This very much limits what the Government can say on the subject at present.

## **PRISONS ISSUES**

### **Political Prisoners**

- There are no political prisoners in Northern Ireland. No prisoners in Northern Ireland are imprisoned because of their beliefs; all have been convicted by the courts of
- crimes under the criminal law, in many cases serious crimes of violence including murder, fire-arms offences and explosive offences.

### **Early Release for Terrorists**

- HMG has said that there will be no amnesty for those convicted of terrorist-related offences and that all prisoners shall continue to serve their sentences in accordance with the law.
- Flowing from the Agreement the Government gave a commitment to introduce legislation to establish an independent body to oversee the early release of prisoners convicted of terrorist offences. The Northern Ireland (Sentences) Act 1998 received Royal Assent on 28 July 1998. On 30 July 1998 the Secretary of State appointed Sentence Review Commissioners to consider applications from prisoners for early release. The first Annual Report of the Sentence Review Commissioners was published on 21 July 1999 and is available to the public through the Stationery Office.
- It was estimated that around 450 prisoners would be eligible to apply under this scheme although individual eligibility under the provisions of the Act is entirely a matter for the Commissioners to consider. Eligible determinate sentence prisoners are expected to serve around one third of their sentence and indeterminate prisoners two thirds of the sentence they may otherwise have served.
- Many prisoners have already served lengthy periods of their sentence and since the first releases in September 1998 310 prisoners have been released on licence. Of the remaining cases around 120 have substantive determinations from the Sentence Review Commissioners indicating release dates in the future, and around a further 10 cases are still being considered.

- The legislation allows that, if circumstances permit, the Secretary of State may direct that eligible prisoners remaining in custody may be released after the scheme has operated for a period of two years (provided an equivalent period has been served). The Secretary of State retains the authority to vary the cut-off date or suspend the scheme in its entirety.
- There are a number of important safeguards in the legislation:-
  - ⇒ prisoners affiliated to groups continuing to engage in violence or which return to violence will not be given early release;
  - ⇒ eligible prisoners will be released on licence and will be recalled to prison if they give support to an organisation engaged in terrorist activities or themselves re-engage in terrorist activity;
  - ⇒ life sentence prisoners will not be released if they are considered to be a serious risk to the public; and
  - ⇒ the scheme can be suspended if the circumstances require it.

### **Northern Ireland Prison Service**

- The Northern Ireland Prison Service is committed to offering a service to the community in Northern Ireland by holding prisoners securely and working to reduce the risk of re-offending through offering constructive regimes.
- The Northern Ireland Prison Service offers all prisoners the opportunity to use their time in prison constructively through education and where appropriate, work and training.
- All prisoners are treated as individuals regardless of their political or religious beliefs.
- The Prison Service offers many facilities to allow prisoners to retain links with their families including access to telephones in all prisons, regular (at least weekly) visits for all prisoners and generous arrangements for pre-release and compassionate temporary release.

### **Prison Population**

- The prison population has reflected the level and form of violence in Northern Ireland; although an increasing proportion of the current prison population has been convicted of sexual or drug-related offences.
- Although the imprisonment rate is currently lower than elsewhere in the UK a larger proportion of the prison population are long-term prisoners, many of whom have been

sentenced for serious terrorist offences (including 128 who are life sentence/SOSP prisoners; 20 republicans; 30 loyalists; 78 non-terrorists).

- The population has steadily fallen from 1,933 in 1993 to around 1,124 in January 2000. The early release scheme has naturally played a significant part in this although the trend has been downward for some years.
- A number of accommodation blocks at HMP Maze have already closed and with the prospect of further releases the closure of the Maze, by the end of 2000, is an option being seriously considered.

### **Intra-UK Transfer of Prisoners**

- The Government remains committed to the policy of allowing prisoners to serve their sentences close to their family if possible and allows transfers, either temporary or permanent, between jurisdictions to facilitate this.
- Since 1992, 32 terrorist prisoners have been transferred from GB to NI; this includes 14 prisoners transferred permanently and 18 prisoners on temporary or restricted transfers. A number have subsequently been released on licence under the Sentences Act.

### **Repatriation to the Republic of Ireland**

- The Government remains committed to its policy of repatriating prisoners under the terms of its international agreements.
- Until November 1995 it was not possible to repatriate prisoners to the Republic of Ireland as the Irish Government had not ratified the relevant international convention. Since then the Home Secretary has agreed to the repatriation to the Republic of Ireland from the United Kingdom of 28 prisoners sentenced for terrorist offences and a further 35 prisoners sentenced for non-terrorist.
- **24** prisoners have been repatriated from the Republic of Ireland to Northern Ireland and further cases remain under consideration. 3 prisoners from the USA have also been repatriated to Northern Ireland since 1997.

### **RACE RELATIONS**

- Race Relations legislation following the general lines of the Race Relations Act 1976 was introduced in Northern Ireland in August 1997.

*Tony Canavan*

- Racial discrimination is now unlawful in employment, training and related matters, in education, in the provision of goods, facilities and services, and in the disposal and management of premises.
- Individuals have a right of direct access to the courts and tribunal for legal remedies for unlawful discrimination.
- A Commission for Racial Equality for Northern Ireland (CRENI) was established to help enforce the legislation and to promote equality of opportunity and good relations between people of different racial groups. CRENI has now been dissolved and its functions have been taken over by the Equality Commission.
- Irish Traveller community is defined as a racial group for the purpose of the legislation.
- It is estimated that ethnic minority groups comprise less than 1% of the total Northern Ireland population

### **MacBride**

*Tony Canavan*

- The MacBride Principles are considered unnecessary because the concerns they address are already covered by the more wide-ranging, precise and stringent requirements of the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order.
- The Fair Employment and Treatment legislation is working; what Northern Ireland needs is more job-creating investment which will help achieve fair employment for both communities.

### **EQUALITY AND EQUITY**

#### **Employment Equality Review**

*Tony Canavan*

- Following a review of employment equality undertaken by the Standing Advisory Commission for Human Rights (SACHR), the Government published a White Paper 'Partnership for Equality' on 11 March 1998, which set out future policies and legislation on employment equality in Northern Ireland. The Proposals are now contained in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, and the Fair Employment and Treatment (NI) Order 1998.
- On 14 October 1998 the Government announced details of its proposed changes to Fair Employment Legislation. These changes are included in the Fair Employment and Treatment NI Order 1998. They:
  - extend the legislation to cover the provisions of goods, facilities, services and premises (including land);
  - provide a right of appeal against national security certificates;

- broaden the scope of monitoring to include part time workers and leavers;
- give additional roles to the Equality Commission to
  - advise Government on measures to reduce the number of, or imbalance in, the unemployed;
  - advise employers on recruitment from the unemployed;
  - keep the working of the legislation under review and to submit proposals to Government for its amendment.;
  - draw up codes of practice on issues relating to goods, facilities etc as it considers necessary;
- allow employers and training providers to engage in religious specific training;
- provide protection against allegations of indirect discrimination for employers;
- extend legislation to cover discrimination by; or in relation to, partnerships of six or more and barristers;
- allow for compensation for unintentional discrimination; and
- consolidate existing legislation.

The Order is now fully operational.

### **Equality Commission for Northern Ireland**

*Tony Canavan*

- Legislative provision for the new Equality Commission for Northern Ireland is contained in the Northern Ireland Act 1998, Sections 73 and 74 and Schedules 8 and 9. The Commission officially took over the functions previously exercised by the Fair Employment Commission, the Equal Opportunities Commission, the Commission for Racial Equality and the Disability Council on 1 October 1999. Twenty Commissioners were appointed on 2 August 1999.

### **Statutory Equality Obligation (Equality Schemes)**

*Tony Canavan*

- Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 come into force on the 1st January 2000 and will provide the legislative base for the replacement of the existing PAFT guidelines. The legislation places a statutory obligation on public bodies (including UK Departments operating in Northern Ireland and District Councils) in carrying out their functions, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between the range of social categories previously covered by the PAFT administrative guidelines and, without prejudice to this obligation, to have

regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, and racial group.

- The main vehicle by which a public authority will fulfill its statutory obligations will be through its Equality Scheme. From 1st January 2000 Public Authorities will have six months i.e. until 30th June 2000 to prepare, consult on and submit their schemes to the Equality Commission for approval. Schedule 9 sets out the parameters of a scheme which will be supplemented by detailed guidelines produced by the new Equality Commission subject to the approval of the Secretary of State. Equality Schemes in particular will include details for assessing and consulting on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by the public authority on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

### **Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC)**

*Tony Canavan*

- The CRC was established in 1990 to promote community relations work in Northern Ireland. It has a budget in 1999/00 of over £2.5m and the Council has its own grant making capacity. Its members (up to 24) represent a broad spectrum of community interests.

### **District Council Community Relations Programme**

*Tony Canavan*

- The Government provides grant aid for programmes which command cross-political support and encourage cross-community contact, mutual understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.

### **Community Reconciliation Bodies**

*Tony Canavan*

- Core-funding is provided to support bodies which promote cross-community contact, mutual understanding and awareness of cultural diversity.

### **Cultural Traditions Programme**

*Tony Canavan*

- This programme aims to encourage greater understanding about different cultures and traditions in Northern Ireland. It includes support for the Irish Language and Ulster Scots.

## TARGETING SOCIAL NEED (TSN) - NEW TSN

Tony Caravan

The Government continues to attach a high priority to the Targeting Social Need (TSN) Initiative. Economic and social deprivation exists on both sides of the Northern Ireland community; however, on all major social and economic indicators, Catholics in Northern Ireland generally experience greater levels of disadvantage than Protestants. The Government believes that greater equality can be achieved by improving the social and economic conditions of the most disadvantaged areas and people.

- The Government's White Paper 'Partnership for Equality', published on 11 March 1998, set out plans for a more effective New TSN initiative.
- New TSN aims to target efforts and available resources on people, groups and areas in greatest social need. It comprises 3 complementary elements:
  - a particular focus on tackling the problems of unemployment and on enhancing employability;
  - action to tackle key inequalities in areas such as health, housing and education; and,
  - Promoting Social Inclusion (PSI): which aims to identify and tackle factors which need to be dealt with cross-departmentally.
- Departments have renewed their activities in relation to New TSN and have developed 3 year New TSN Action Plans which will come into effect on 1 January 2000.
  - the draft Plans will be published for consultation in the first New TSN Annual Report which is due shortly
  - the Plans will be renewed and progress reported in future Annual Reports
- The then Secretary of State, Rt Hon Dr Mowlam MP, launched New TSN in July 1998 and initiated consultation on the issues to be tackled under PSI. Responses to the consultation have been analysed and Mr McFall announced on June 16 that the first PSI priorities would be:
  - action to alleviate the needs of travellers;
  - a strategic approach to the needs of minority ethnic groups;
  - the problems of teenage parenthood; and,
  - strategies for making services more accessible to minority groups and others at risk of social exclusion - focusing firstly on how information can be presented and distributed in ways appropriate to their needs.

## IRISH LANGUAGE AND ULSTER SCOTS

DC AL

The Government is committed to a policy of promoting greater respect for, and understanding of, the diversity of cultural traditions across the whole community in Northern Ireland. In this context, it supports activities which enhance awareness and appreciation of the Irish Language. Recurrent grants of £2.5m were made in 1998/99 to the 8 grant-aided Irish-Medium schools in Northern Ireland - 7 primary and 1 secondary. Well-founded applications for grant-aided status for Irish-Medium schools are considered on their merits.

- The Good Friday Agreement states that all participants recognize the importance of respect, understanding and tolerance in relation to linguistic diversity, including in Northern Ireland the Irish language. Ulster Scots and the languages of the various ethnic communities all of which are part of the cultural wealth of the island of Ireland. To that end provision was made for a North/South Implementation Body for Language, with separate agencies for Irish and Ulster Scots, under an agreement signed by the two governments on 8 March 1999. The Body will come into being at devolution under legislation that was enacted in March 1999.
- As a result of the Agreement, new legislation has recently been enacted which charges the Department of Education with a statutory duty to facilitate and encourage Irish medium education, similar to that for Integrated Education.
- In June 1998 the Government announced its intention to sign the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages and said that Irish would be recognised as a regional or minority language for the purpose of Part II of the Charter. A consultation paper has been issued to consider arrangements on how best to discharge its functions. The Government expects shortly to be in a position to sign and ratify the Charter and will also apply the general commitments of Part II of the
- Charter to Ulster-Scots. During 1999 Irish will be specified for the more detailed provisions of Part III.
- A Linguistic Diversity Branch has been established which has a key task in identifying the progress which must be made for Irish to be specified for Part III of the Charter. This branch will also develop Government policy on Irish, Ulster-Scots and ethnic minority languages and support the North-South Language Implementation Body.

## EDUCATION

DAFETIE

- The Government believes that education has a role to play in the process of improving community relations among young people. To this end a number of measures, for which £3.4m has been allocated in the current financial year, are available:
- the Schools Community Relations Programme and Youth Service Support Scheme, administered by the Education and Library Boards and the Youth Council, provide modest grant support to schools, colleges and youth groups to develop joint, collaborative programmes involving young people from different backgrounds. Nearly

7 schools (about 50% of NI schools) and over 500 youth groups are actively involved;

- the Cultural Traditions programme, introduced in May 1989, seeks to provide opportunities through which young people can explore both their shared cultural heritage and the rich diversity of cultural traditions;
- The Northern Ireland Statutory Curriculum includes the 2 Educational (Cross-Curricular) themes of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU) and Cultural Heritage (CH).
- A Ministerial Working Group was set up in December 1998 to consider ways in which the education service, in partnership with all schools, can promote tolerance through the general curriculum. The report of the working group entitled "Towards a Culture of Tolerance: Education for Diversity" was launched for consultation by the Minister on 15 September 1999. It has been circulated widely to education interests, community relations bodies, political parties, the Assembly and District Councils. Responses have been requested by 17 December 1999.

### **Integrated Schools**

- Transformation of existing schools to integrated status remains the fastest and most economic means of meeting parental demand for integrated education for their children. Since the publication in 1997, of the Department's policy document, "Integrated Education: A Framework for Transformation", 4 controlled primary and 3 controlled secondary schools have transformed to controlled integrated status. Approval has been granted to a further 3 schools from September 1999. This will bring the total number of integrated schools to 43 with over 11,000 pupils.
- The Government established a Working Group in June 1998 to examine ways of further enhancing the contribution of all schools to the promotion of a Culture of Tolerance as outlined in the Agreement, with particular emphasis on the further development of the integrated sector. The Group's report "Towards A Culture Of Tolerance: Integrating Education" was published in December 1998. The Minister has reconvened the Towards a Culture of Tolerance Integrating Education Working Group to take forward the issues raised during the consultation on the Progress Report.

### **INTERNATIONAL FUND FOR IRELAND (IFI)**

IFI

- The IFI was established in 1986 by the British and Irish Governments in the wake of the Anglo-Irish Agreement. It is administered by an independent Board, comprising a Chairman and 6 other Members jointly appointed by the two Governments.
- The Fund's geographical remit covers the 6 counties of Northern Ireland and the 6 southern border counties of Donegal, Cavan, Monaghan, Sligo, Leitrim and Louth.

The Fund is required to spend approximately 75% of its resources in Northern Ireland.

- The Board is supported by a Secretariat staffed by officials seconded by the two Governments and is headed by Joint Directors General based in Belfast and Dublin respectively.
- To date the donors to the Fund include the US (US\$327m), the EC (EURO 184m), with a further 45m Euros pledged for the next three years, Canada (C\$5.2m), New Zealand (NZ\$900,000) and Australia (AUS \$7m).
- Up to 30 September 1998 the Fund approved assistance of some £341m to over 4,000 projects and had contributed to the generation of approximately 34,000 jobs - including part-time and construction jobs.
- The Fund has a particular interest in supporting projects with a cross-border dimension.
- The Fund has also supported five major flagship projects because of the impact they will have on the economic regeneration of their region: the construction of the Erne-Shannon waterway; the development of the Navan Fort visitor centre; the economic regeneration of the Strabane/Lifford area; pump-priming support for the proposed new University campus at Springvale in West Belfast; and the development of the St Patrick's visitors centre Downpatrick.
- The IFI is very successful in leveraging public and private sector investments, at a rate of approximately 1:2. This means that IFI involvement has resulted in investments of over 1 billion pounds.