



DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

from the Private Secretary to the Minister

SUB 179/2001

FROM: CONOR McPARLAND
PS/Mr McGuinness

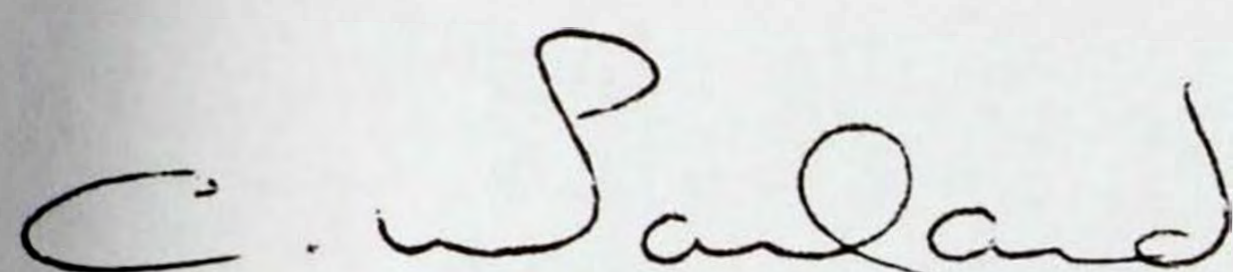
DATE: 24 August 2001

To: PS/Mr Mallon
PS/Mr Empey

NORTH BELFAST

1. Glen McDonald's note of 8 August 2001 provided a report on the situation in North Belfast regarding Holy Cross school, as requested by Sir Reg Empey and Mr Seamus Mallon.
2. The Department has subsequently had further discussions with CCMS and I thought it important to provide an update on the current position as advised by them.
3. The situation in North Belfast has deteriorated. Tension between the two communities is high and is likely to heighten further. There are also internal tensions within each community which add to the complexity and volatility of the situation. The attempts by the Mediation Network to broker talks and find a resolution have been unsuccessful.
4. CCMS has been continuing its efforts to support the Board of Governors in ensuring that the school remains open and education continues to be provided for the pupils. There is concern that there are elements on both sides who may consider keeping the children out of school as a means of furthering their own particular agenda. CCMS and the BoG will continue to work to avoid this situation and the alternative access through St Gabriel's School will be utilised if necessary. However, the safety of the children is the prime concern and will be kept constantly under review.

5. There is considerable pressure on the BoG and the teaching staff and there may be a need for some additional practical support measures. The Department of Education will keep this under consideration in liaison with CCMS and the BELB.



CONOR McPARLAND

cc PS/Mr Haughey
PS/Mr Nesbitt
PS/Mr Loughran
Mr McGinn (o/a)
Mr McCusker
Mr Peover
Mrs Bunting
Mr Stewart
OFM/DFM Advisers
Mr McAteer
Dr Browne