

F/c

cc Mr Canavan  
Dr McCoy  
Mr Morrow  
Mr Carson

FROM: S CORBETT  
CCRU

9 May 1996

TO: J A GIBBONS  
IPL DIVISION

**COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND GREYBAND**

1. Your note of 1 May to Tony Canavan covered the FCO editor's revised version of CCRU's draft greyband on 'Community Relations in Northern Ireland'. You asked if CCRU was content with the 'one or two minor amendments'.
2. Most of the editor's changes are extremely minor and are acceptable to CCRU. There are, however, some with which we are not content. I attach a revised greyband which highlights CCRU's changes to the editor's version in bold type.
3. I would be happy to discuss.

*S. Corbett*  
SAM CORBETT

DRAFT

April 1996

#### COMMUNITY RELATIONS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The traditional divisions within the community of Northern Ireland - which for convenience can be broadly characterised as Protestant and Catholic, although the problem is as much political and national as religious - are deeply rooted in several hundred years of Irish and British history. (The Protestant majority largely regard themselves as British, wishing to remain part of the United Kingdom; a majority of the Catholic community think of themselves as Irish and support parties working for a united Ireland.) From these divisions flow political instability and the region's poor image, which have had considerable consequences. Progress in creating political structures which command widespread support would help to improve community relations; however, even if such progress was achieved, the underlying problems of community divisions would still need to be addressed.

Over recent years there have been a number of constructive developments in community relations in Northern Ireland. It is now recognised, more clearly than ever, that changes are essential - both in the attitudes of individuals and groups towards each other, and in the political system - to make possible an accommodation between different beliefs, aspirations and traditions. The Government's overall community relations objectives are:

- to ensure that everyone enjoys equality of opportunity and equity of treatment:

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- to increase the level of cross-community contact; and
- to encourage greater mutual understanding and respect of different cultures and traditions.

Direct responsibility for overseeing, reviewing and challenging all policies and programmes which have a bearing upon community relations, in the widest sense, lies with the Central Community Relations Unit (CCRU). The CCRU was set up in September 1987, to advise the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland on all aspects of the relationship between the different sections of the Northern Ireland community. It reports directly to the Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. The Department of Education for Northern Ireland (DENI) is also responsible for developing and implementing community relations policies in the education and youth sectors and through the arts, museums, sport and recreation.

#### Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment

The aim of the Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT) initiative is to ensure that, in practice, issues of equality and equity condition policy-making and action in all spheres and at all levels of Government activity, whether in regulatory and administrative functions or through the delivery of services to the public. Guidance on this was issued to all Northern Ireland Government Departments and to the Northern Ireland Office, and came into effect on 1 January 1994.

The guidance is designed to ensure that in relation to selected groups, considerations of **equality**, equity and non-discrimination are, from the outset, built into the preparation of policy proposals, including legislation, other initiatives and strategic plans for the implementation of policy and the delivery of services. Groups coming within the

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scope of the guidelines include people of different gender, age, ethnic group, religious belief or political opinion; the married and unmarried; the disabled and those who are not; people with or without **dependents**; and people of **differing** sexual orientation.

Reports on the operation of PAFT are published annually.

### Targeting Social Need

There is still economic and social disadvantage on both sides of the Northern Ireland community. On all major indicators, however, Catholics generally do worse than Protestants. Such experiences sustain feelings of discrimination and alienation which, in turn, influence attitudes to political and security issues. The Targeting Social Need (TSN) initiative was launched, in February 1991, in order to focus resources more precisely on Northern Ireland's most disadvantaged areas and people, Protestant and Catholic, identified by reference to objective criteria of need. In the 1995 Public Expenditure Survey, within the broad, underlying theme of "Building on Peace", TSN was confirmed as an important **continuing** Public Expenditure priority. In addition, TSN principles are reflected in the NI Single Programming Document, approved by the European Commission in 1994, and the EU Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation.

TSN is a means of **targeting** resources to meet disadvantage wherever this occurs; it is not concerned with reverse discrimination or quotas, which would be illegal. However, since one section of the community generally suffers higher levels of social and economic disadvantage, the targeting of objectively identified need should have the effect of reducing existing differentials. This, in turn, should contribute to healing community divisions.

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### Northern Ireland Community Relations Council

In June 1989, the **Government** announced its support for the creation of a new independent body to improve community relations. The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (NICRC) was formally established in January 1990 to:

- provide support, facilities and recognition for local organisations working to promote community relations, awareness of cultural diversity and the resolution of conflict;
- promote constructive debate throughout Northern Ireland about community relations and cultural diversity;
- develop opportunities for people from different traditions to meet, work together and encourage mutual understanding; and
- increase public awareness of, and support for, activities which improve community relations and promote awareness of cultural diversity.

**The Council has full policy responsibility** for the core-funding of most community relations bodies. It also administers discretionary grant schemes which support activities designed to increase contact between people from differing traditions or cultures, and encourage confidence and an acceptance of diversity in Northern Ireland. Up to one-third of the members of the Council are appointed by the Government.

### Cultural Traditions

Grant-support is provided towards a Cultural Traditions Programme, which aims to encourage greater understanding

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about different cultural traditions in Northern Ireland, and demonstrate that differences do not have to lead to division. The Programme includes assistance for a wide range of Irish language activities.

In December 1989, the Ultach Trust was established to widen appreciation of the contribution which the Irish language has made to the cultural heritage of Northern Ireland, and to increase the knowledge of the language throughout the community. With financial assistance from the European Commission's Physical and Social Environment Programme (PSEP), the International Fund for Ireland and the Government, the Trust set up its capital endowment fund to provide long-term support for Irish language projects. The Government also **grant aids** the Trust's core expenditure and **makes** a contribution towards its programme of support for Irish language groups.

#### District Council Programmes

District Councils receive financial support from the Government for community relations programmes which are designed to:

- increase cross-community contact;
- promote greater mutual understanding; and
- encourage appreciation of cultural diversity.

In order to participate, Councils must endorse an explicit policy statement to develop a community relations programme, programmes must command cross-political support, and Councils must appoint one or more Community Relations Officers to develop and manage the programme.

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### Research and Development

The Government is giving financial assistance towards an expanding programme of research into the nature and sources of community divisions within Northern Ireland and into the effectiveness of current Government policies. The programme is studying changes of attitude, the experiences of different localities and community conflict in other countries. It is also **concerned with** identifying good practice in community relations work and with evaluating the impact of community relations projects.

There has been a considerable improvement in attitudes within the community, according to the Northern Ireland Social Attitudes Survey. This is due in no small measure to the extensive development of community relations programmes over the last few years.

### Schools Cross-Community Contact Scheme

In October 1987, the Government introduced the Cross-Community Contact Scheme, which is administered by the DENI and provides grant-aid **towards establishing and developing** contacts between schools, youth groups and community groups. The emphasis is on continuous, systematic programmes of work and activity which help to break down traditional barriers, and encourage children and young people to work together - for instance by jointly studying history, cultural heritage, geography and the environment. Almost 600 schools and more than 300 youth and community groups have been engaged in grant-aided programmes under the scheme.

### Education Reform Programme

The DENI has introduced a major programme of educational reform including, from September 1990, a new common

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curriculum. The reforms reflect similar changes being implemented in the rest of the United Kingdom; but a unique feature for Northern Ireland is the introduction of two cross-curricular themes covering education for mutual understanding (EMU) and cultural heritage. Both of these themes are mandatory and are included in the teaching of most of the other subjects. Each of the five Northern Ireland Education and Library Boards, which are directly responsible for administering schools in their geographical areas, has an officer to develop EMU.

Another feature of the reform programme is the broadening of parental choice to give parents the right to opt for the integrated education of their children, whereby Catholic and Protestant children attend the same school.

#### The Spirit of Enniskillen Bursary Scheme

The spirit of forgiveness, tolerance and reconciliation which emerged after the atrocity in Enniskillen on Remembrance Day, 8 November 1987 (when a Provisional IRA bomb killed 11 people and injured 63), led to the establishment of this scheme. It seeks to encourage young people between the ages of 16 and 19 to broaden their horizons by travelling - in mixed religious groups of four or six - to other countries, to see at first hand how people from different backgrounds have learnt to live together. In 1995, the scheme gave 50 bursaries to enable young people to make study visits to the United States and to countries in the **European Union** and the Middle East. Over the past five years, 250 young people have participated in the scheme.

#### European Union Programme (s)

The CCRU is responsible for administering the Community Relations measure of the European Commission's second

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Physical and Social Environment Sub-Programme in the NI Single Programming Document, which runs from 1994 to 1999. Under this measure the **European Union** has allocated 20.43 Mecu (approximately £16m) to assist community reconciliation projects. In 1995 the **European Union** established a Special Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Border Counties of the Republic of Ireland with funds of 300 Mecu (approximately £250m). One of the measures under the Programme is for community reconciliation in Northern Ireland and the Community Relations Council acts as an Intermediary Funding Body, appointed by the European Commission, to implement it.

#### The way forward

The Government is committed in Northern Ireland to policies directly targeted at healing divisions within the community. Solutions will come neither quickly nor easily to difficulties stemming from several hundred years of history and from the deeply-rooted fears and perceptions held by the different sections of the community. The lessening of violence since 1994, far from removing the need for reconciliation work, throws its value into greater focus. Community relations initiatives remain important in the rebuilding of inter-communal trust, which is essential for sustainable political development.

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