

cc PS/Michael Ancram (B&L)  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Jardine  
Mr Jordan  
Ms McGivern  
Mrs McCusker  
Mr Ritchie ✓ *JWS*  
Dr McCoy

*Mr Carson*  
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*file*

From: J A Canavan  
CCRU

29 April 1997

To: PS/Michael Ancram (DENI)

#### DEPARTMENTAL BRIEFING FOR NEW MINISTER WITH CR RESPONSIBILITIES

1. As discussed last week, I have prepared a set of briefs on CCRU and its responsibilities for deployment to whichever new Minister has responsibility for community relations and this Unit. DENI Private Office will hold these, on the working assumption that the same person will continue to hold education and CR responsibilities. Should this not be the case, you will pass these to the relevant Private Office. I would be grateful if Michael Ancram's Belfast and London offices could do the same.
2. The following briefs are attached:
  - ♦ CCRU;
  - ♦ Community Relations;
  - ♦ Cultural Identities;
  - ♦ Employment Equality Review;
  - ♦ PAFT; and
  - ♦ TSN.

TC5646/DW

3. This should provide the basic first day information for any new Minister.

[Signed: JAC]

**J A CANAVAN**

TC5646/DW

## **COMMUNITY RELATIONS**

Northern Ireland society is deeply divided along religious and political lines which reflect conflicts dating back centuries. The divisions between the Protestant majority, which is overwhelmingly Unionist and British in cultural identity, and the Catholic minority, largely Nationalist and Irish in identity, extend beyond politics. They are evidenced in residential segregation (particularly in urban, working-class districts), in parallel education systems (a State system catering largely for Protestant pupils, and a Church-run system for Catholics) and in the persistence of socio-economic differentials (with the Catholic population, on the whole, being more disadvantaged).

Notwithstanding the Good Friday Agreement communal divisions continue to be seen sharply particularly during the so-called summer marching season and most particularly at the time of the Drumcree parade in early July which has resulted in much civil disruption and unrest each year since 1995. Disputes over parades, always a source of background tension, have become a focus of community confrontation in recent years. The strong emotions roused by Drumcree created a sense of overt sectarianism, not experienced since the 1970s. This has been manifested in arson attacks on Churches and Orange Halls; the boycotting by Nationalists of Unionist businesses in a limited number of small towns in the West of Northern Ireland; the blockading of Catholic Churches by extreme Unionists; confrontation between football supporters; and continuing disputes over parades in various areas, notably Drumcree, the Oldpark and Lower ormeau areas of Belfast, Londonderry and Dunloy.

### **Community Relations Movement**

Over several decades a voluntary community relations movement has developed which seeks to maintain contact between both sections of the community, to offer an alternative to segregation and to promote the peaceful resolution of political difference. Some organisations are based on religious principles, such as the Corrymeela Community founded in the 1960s. Others were responses in local areas to specific acts of violence. Some are linked to community development initiatives in working-class areas. Local campaigns for integrated schools can also be seen as part of this wider movement.

These voluntary organisations effectively operated without Governmental support until the late 1980s. At that time, a more coherent community relations policy was developed in

response both to this movement and to the development by academics and practitioners of a theoretical basis for community relations work. The Government adopted a more proactive policy of promoting integrated education. It also established a budget and institutions to promote improved community relations.

The Good Friday Agreement recognised and valued the work being done by many organisations to develop reconciliation and mutual understanding and respect between and within communities and saw such work as having a vital role in consolidating peace and political agreement. Accordingly it was pledged that support would continue and the case for enhanced financial assistance would be positively considered.

### CCRU

The Central Community Relations Unit was established in 1987 as part of the Central Secretariat, with the remit of advising the Secretary of State on all aspects of community relations. It stands outside the Northern Ireland Departmental system, reporting through the Director of Central Secretariat to the Head of the NI Civil Service. Currently located in Belfast City Centre, it has a staff of 19. Over the years the interpretation of its initial remit has been extended to include the development of policy on equality and equity (including the Targeting Social Need and Policy Appraisal for Fair Treatment initiatives) and to issues of cultural identity, notably policy towards the Irish language. **(New work and Branches?)**

CCRU's financial resources for community relations activities have grown to a current level of £5.7m annually. This is applied to funding for voluntary CR organisations (largely via the Community Relations Council - see below), grants to District Councils for local community relations programmes, the provision of cross-community facilities in rural areas, and research.

The Department of Education has its own community relations programme for schools and young people. In the education system, community relations objectives are promoted through aspects of the compulsory curriculum, notably the cross-curricular theme of Education for Mutual Understanding (EMU). A Cross Community Contact Scheme also provides grants for establishing links between the different elements of the segregated education system. £3.4m is spent annually by DENI on its community relations programme. This is in addition to expenditure on integrated education.

## Community Relations Council

The Northern Ireland Community Relations Council (CRC) was established in 1990, with Governmental encouragement, as a charity and limited company. It is not a statutory body. It has up to 24 Council members, of whom up to one-third are appointed by the Secretary of State. Its current Chairman is Jonathan Bardon, a well-known local historian and teacher, and Director is Mr Will Glendinning. Most of CRC's funding comes from the CCRU budget, though voluntary trusts and the European Union also contribute. Almost all support for smaller voluntary organisations is now channelled through CRC. It has established itself as a centre of expertise on community relations in Northern Ireland, co-ordinating and advising the voluntary CR movement.

## Other Funding

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In addition to over £9.0m annual Government expenditure on community relations managed by CCRU and DENI, there are two significant external sources of financial assistance for community relations projects. The European Union has funded measures in its Structural Funds programmes since 1990. Over the period 1994-99 a total of £16m ~~in the form of~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~was~~ available under the Physical and Social Environment Sub-Programme under the mainstream regional development funds. In addition, since 1995 the EU has provided the Special Support Programme for Peace and Reconciliation in Northern Ireland. Though reconciliation runs as a theme throughout the programme, a specific measure entitled "Pathways to Reconciliation", which is administered directly by the CRC as an Intermediate Funding Body, made available approx £1m pa over the five year period of the programme. XX  
The International Fund for Ireland has supported community relations projects for many years and this year's allocation under its Community Bridges programme is £1.8m. EU funding, in its current form, is unlikely to continue after 1999 and the IFI will not exist indefinitely. It is therefore likely that the amount of external financial assistance available to community relations projects will decline sharply in the early years of the next century. This will present problems for many funded organisations and underscores the need for well planned exit strategies.

## CULTURAL IDENTITIES

Northern Ireland's politico-religious divisions are reflected in the cultural identities espoused by its people. Put in the simplest terms, Unionists identify themselves as culturally British, and Nationalists as Irish. In truth, the position is more complex. Many Unionists would accept some element of Irishness, provided it is not interpreted as sympathy for Irish unity. Others would stress their identification with the UK as a multi-cultural society, where the same rights should apply whether in London or Londonderry. Others emphasise the particular regional identity of Ulster Protestantism and its strong Scottish links. On the Nationalist side, there is greater certainty about cultural identity, but its expression might range from the private gestures of holding an Irish passport or watching RTE, through to the aggressive enthusiasm of a minority for the Irish language.

### Cultural Traditions Movement

During the period of the old Stormont administration (1921-72), the cultural identity of the Nationalist population received little recognition from the Government. In the Direct Rule era, the growing political influence of Nationalist parties, the emergence of a self-confident Catholic middle class, membership of the European Union and international esteem for Irish culture (from Seamus Heaney to Riverdance) has put the Irish identity firmly on the local cultural agenda. The Anglo-Irish Agreement of 1985 referred to "measures to foster the cultural heritage of both traditions". In the 1980s an informal group of academics, teachers and arts workers formed the Cultural Traditions Group to celebrate the diversity of Northern Ireland's cultural traditions and encourage greater mutual respect between them. In 1990 the CTG was subsumed within the newly created Community Relations Council and its theory of cultural traditions was effectively endorsed by Government. It remains a key element in community relations policy and local organisations promoting particular cultural traditions receive grants from CRC and CCRU.

There has been a flowering in the past ten years of groups promoting aspects of cultural identity. However, though all are happy to endorse that part of the CTG agenda which encourages affirmation of their own identity (particularly if grants are available), some have

had difficulty in progressing to respect for the identities of others. Cultural traditions grants for the exploration of aspects of the Orange identity have been particularly problematic. Many Nationalists would regard the Orange Order as essentially sectarian and see no scope for its inclusion in a community relations agenda. Unionist politicians (including Mr Trimble who was a founding member of CTG) have criticised the community relations ideology which has explicitly underlain the work of the CTG since 1990. They would claim that the Group should simply be representative of the broadest possible spectrum of traditions, without making value judgements about their contribution to community relations.

### Irish Language

The 1991 Census indicated that 142,000 people in Northern Ireland had some knowledge of the Irish language. These would, almost entirely, be Nationalist (the language is taught as a subject in most Catholic second-level schools). Unlike the traditional Celtic languages of Scotland and Wales, there is not an unbroken tradition of its use as a first language in specific geographic areas. The Irish language movement is essentially revivalist. Most Nationalists would have no interest in using the language themselves, but they would support the rights of those who wish to, appreciate acknowledgement of the language by the State and would like to see it become part of the "furniture of administration". Recent years have seen the development, on parental initiative, of Irish-medium schools and pressure to accept as many of these as possible for Government grant-aid. Seven primary and one secondary Irish-medium schools are current grant-aided. There is also pressure for greater access to the Republic's Irish language TV channel and for assistance to Irish language programme-makers in Northern Ireland. In common with minority language interests in GB, the Northern Ireland Irish language movement has urged UK adherence to the Council of Europe's Charter on Minority or Regional Languages.

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Starting from a very low base, Government support for Irish-language projects has grown in recent years, with £2.5m spent in 1995/96 (excluding expenditure on the teaching of Irish as a second language in English-medium schools). Part of this funding consists of direct grants from CCRU to Irish language organisations, particularly the Ultach Trust, which was established in 1987 as an apolitical umbrella organisation, interested particularly in spreading

knowledge of Irish to the wider community. Other parts of the movement are more explicitly political and Sinn Fein is a strong supporter of increased funding and rights for Irish language users. The SDLP and the Irish Government also support the movement, though in a more measured way.

Though many Unionists are indifferent to aspects of the Irish language movement which do not intrude on their own sense of identity (eg Irish-medium education and Irish language broadcasting), they would resent greater use of Irish in administration, which has particular symbolic importance. The Government's policy has also been opposed to bilingualism in administration. In 1985, however, a Stormont-era law, which prevented District Councils from erecting street name plates in a language other than English, was repealed. The impact of this repeal was less controversial than many had anticipated, but moves towards bilingualism in the administration of some District Councils have aroused Unionist antagonism.

### Ulster-Scots

Partly as a reaction to the Irish language movement, recent years have seen the emergence of a campaign for recognition of the Ulster-Scots linguistic tradition, despite academic doubts about its claimed status as a language, separate from English. The Scottish Office has given some limited financial support to the Scots language movement and Government policy to date has been to accord similar recognition to Ulster-Scots. However, supporters of the movement claim that it should receive funding on the same scale as that for Irish. The Government's response has been that each minority language movement must be treated in the light of its specific circumstances, with no read-across from expenditure on Irish to Ulster-Scots, just as it has rejected the Irish language movement's demand for funding on a par with Scottish Gaelic and Welsh. The numbers involved in the Ulster-Scots language movement are very small, but it attracts a sympathetic response from many Unionists, including several MPs. It is likely that there will be demand for the inclusion of a question on Ulster-Scots in the next Census, paralleling a similar campaign in Scotland.



### Other Identities

Though many have vested interest in maintaining the idea of bi-polar traditions, it should also be remembered that there are other identities, separate from Unionism and Nationalism. Up to 10,000 people in Northern Ireland belong to various ethnic minority communities, including a substantial Chinese presence. A women's movement, including many working class community activists, is focusing attention increasingly on gender identity. Finally, the greatest cultural influences on almost everyone in Northern Ireland are neither Irish nor Ulster in origin, but derive from global communications. Unionists and Nationalists may be too preoccupied with asserting "parity of esteem" for their own cultural identities to see that international consumerism is a greater threat to both.

## EMPLOYMENT EQUALITY REVIEW

In 1989, during the Parliamentary passage of the Fair Employment legislation, a Ministerial commitment was given to review equality of opportunity in employment, after five years' experience of the legislation. The Central Community Relations Unit, a part of Central Secretariat, was initially tasked with the review and carried out preliminary work, including the commissioning and publication of research. During 1994 a number of external organisations with an interest in equality issues lobbied for the transfer of responsibility for the review to the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights (SACHR). It was argued that CCRU, as part of Government, could not be fully independent, particularly when assessing initiatives such as TSN and PAFT for which it had policy responsibility. In November 1994 the previous Secretary of State invited SACHR to take forward the review, setting out specific terms of reference in a letter of February 1995.

The NIO have provided sufficient additional resources to SACHR (in total £600k) to carry out a comprehensive review. SACHR has commissioned a considerable body of new research and conducted an extensive consultation process. The anticipated completion date for the review has, however, slipped on several occasions from the target of early 1996 in the original terms of reference. SACHR is now expected to report in summer 1997, with publication of the document as a Command paper.

SACHR will hope that its report will be at least as influential as its 1987 First Report on Discrimination, which provided a major input to the development of the 1989 Fair Employment legislation. It would raise issues of fair employment and the socio-economic status of the minority community which are regarded as critical by Nationalists and the Irish Government. Conversely, fair employment arouses Unionist sensitivities, particularly when seen in the context of Catholic demographic growth, the rise of a self-assured Catholic middle class and the decline of economic sectors in which Protestants have predominated.

It is expected that the report will express broad satisfaction with the way the 1989 legislation has impacted on those in employment. Marginal changes to the legislation may be recommended. It is unlikely that it will recommend major institutional changes to the Fair

Employment Commission and Fair Employment Tribunal. SACHR may recommend extending the law against religious discrimination to include the provision of goods, facilities and services. This would be a controversial issue, with potential impact on many areas of Northern Ireland life. There has been little previous public or party political pressure for such a change. It is likely that significant recommendations on the Government's TSN and PAFT initiatives will emerge. These are seen as ways of impacting on the continuing communal differentials between Catholics and Protestants, particularly the disproportionate number of Catholics among the long term unemployed. Implementation of such recommendations could have significant resource implications and will require careful consideration. There may also be recommendations on training, education and inward investment.

Detailed advice on handling the governmental response to the report will be submitted in due course. It is likely that further public consultation will be needed on at least some of the SACHR recommendations, probably leading ultimately to publication of a Green or White Paper on equality of opportunity in employment.

## PAFT

At the end of 1993 administrative guidelines were circulated to Northern Ireland Departments, the NIO and other parts of the public service on Policy Appraisal and Fair Treatment (PAFT). These guidelines require appraisals of potential discriminatory impact in relation to eight categories (inter alia, religion, gender, race, age, sexual orientation) when considering new policies or services, and when reviewing existing ones.

The guidelines were a Northern Ireland development of an existing Whitehall equality proofing initiative. However, another important influence was pressure over a period of years from the Northern Ireland employment equality lobby for a statutory obligation on the public sector to promote equality of opportunity in employment. Earlier guidelines had been withdrawn and revised under pressure from the lobby, which retains a sceptical attitude to PAFT, as a second best alternative to legislation.

In 1994 the previous Secretary of State gave a commitment to the publication of annual reports on the implementation of PAFT. Three such reports have now been issued. During 1996 the initiative came under scrutiny in the context of SACHR's review of employment equality (see separate brief). Research commissioned by SACHR found that implementation had been patchy and recommended greater co-ordination from the centre and more training. These comments were constructively critical and steps have been taken to implement several of the suggestions. At the end of 1996 two discussion papers were published on the possible transformation of PAFT into a statutory obligation. Officials have registered with SACHR the considerable financial, administrative and legal difficulties raised by the proposals in these discussion papers. It is, however, quite possible that SACHR will recommend the statutory approach in its forthcoming report on employment equality.

SACHR's report will offer an opportunity for a review of the initiative, taking into account three years' Departmental experience. The relationship between PAFT and other governmental priorities, including the drive for greater economy, will need to be considered. The aim should be to develop the initiative in a way which advances equality objectives,

reconciles them with other policies and is workable within a constrained resource environment. Further advice on PAFT options will be submitted in due course.

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## TARGETING SOCIAL NEED

CCRU has central policy responsibility for the Targeting Social Need (TSN) initiative, under the oversight of an inter-departmental Social Steering Group (SSG). The TSN initiative was developed following research evidence indicating significant differences in the socio-economic profile of the Catholic and Protestant communities. Higher levels of Catholic deprivation were acknowledged as: contributing to disaffection and alienation from the institutions of the State; impeding progress towards political accommodation; and limiting the prospects for economic growth. Though the initiative was prompted in the first instance by an acknowledgement of the communal differentials, it was also recognised that disadvantage was shared by sections of the Protestant community. The aim of TSN is to target resources on areas and people in greatest need, whatever their community background, with the anticipated effect of eroding, over time, communal differentials.

Since 1991 TSN has been one of the Government's public expenditure priorities, currently placed third after **Law and Order** and **Strengthening the Economy**. TSN runs as a principle through many programmes, but is particularly identified with special area initiatives such as Making Belfast Work, the Londonderry Initiative (both the responsibility of DOE) and the Rural Development Programme (DANI). Certain major programmes are, by their nature, TSN-relevant. These are clearly based on objective criteria of individual need, eg DOE's social housing programme and the Training and Employment Agency's schemes for the unemployed. Other Departments have been able to find effective proxies for individual need, eg the Department of Education redistributes part of the school's budget on the basis of uptake of free school meals by pupils. To assist the geographic targeting of disadvantage, research was commissioned from Manchester University and published in 1994 as the **Robson Indicators**, a listing of local government wards on the basis of a composite deprivation index. There is no centrally-defined list of TSN areas, but Departments are encouraged to use the Robson listings, and other data relevant to their own needs, to assist geographic targeting of programmes.

A further dimension to TSN is monitoring by religion of the uptake of services, with a view to determining that outcomes reflect the complexity of Northern Ireland society. Monitoring allows assessment as to whether policies are impacting on persistent socio-economic disadvantage and on differentials between the communities. However, the collection of religion data has often been regarded by the Departments as controversial, with fears expressed about a high level of non-response by the public.

TSN has come under some external scrutiny in 1996. SACHR published research by one of its members, Professor McLaughlin, and the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action commissioned work by Paul McGill. Both studies were critical of the implementation of the initiative, but they under-emphasised the context of implementation of the initiative, particularly the stringent public expenditure situation in recent years. The McGill report also assumed that it would be relatively easy to adjust UK-wide or European Union policies to achieve a greater TSN impact. This under-estimated the potential negative implications of materially breaching parity with GB, or the impact for the UK, as a net contributor to the EU Budget, of substantially changing the Common Agricultural Policy.

It is quite likely that SACHR will make recommendations on TSN in its report on employment and equality, anticipated in summer 1997. These recommendations will need to be given careful consideration by the Government. A realistic response will inevitably take into account the improbability of significant additional resources being available for the Northern Ireland Block in coming years, and the very limited room for manoeuvre in redirecting resources from other programmes. There are, however, various ways in which Departmental commitments to TSN can be refocused. DED undertook a comprehensive review of its TSN activities in 1994, establishing new structures, targets and timescales, and innovative ways of skewing expenditure, eg the Industrial Development Board awards a higher level of grant for inward investment in defined areas of disadvantage and builds advance factories only in those areas. At the instigation of SSG, other Departments have been encouraged to undertake similar reviews. There is also potential for further development of TSN monitoring, as a low-cost, but important, contribution to the initiative.

**Research**

(Dr McLoay)

CCRU has maintained close contacts with the academic community to encourage high quality research on communal division and approaches to improving community relations, with grant assistance available for approved projects. Several dedicated research units have been established by the NI Universities, notably the Centre for the Study of Conflict at Coleraine and INCORE, an institution for the comparative study of ethnic conflict situations, at Londonderry.

To monitor the state of community relations, attitudinal surveys are carried out, notably the annual NI Social Attitudes Survey. These had indicated consistent improvements in perceptions of inter-community relationships until 1996. Survey evidence since last July has confirmed that Drumcree and its aftermath have had a negative impact on confidence about community relations. Though many in the community relations movement have been disheartened by the turn of events, there is a renewed commitment to work for reconciliation. This has been seen in specific action at local level to resolve parades conflicts and deal with the effects of unrest. The movement remains a considerable resource for positive change in Northern Ireland, which contributes to the achievement of the Government's own objectives in the fields of political development, security and the economy.