

Paul, new file please - make it a general policy file rather than

54901198 - 8/5/98

FROM:

J G SULLIVAN 98 NICSR

msg. 18/5/98.

cc

Mr Hewitt

Mr Thomson

1039/98 (A3)

8 MAY 1998

W. 14/5

~~F 14/5 Mr Flynn / Mr [unclear]~~

MR QUINN

I think we need to open a file in this

REPORT OF THE NI VICTIMS COMMISSIONER

1. I attach a list of the main recommendations of the report by Sir Kenneth Bloomfield which have PE implications.
2. The report argues that the most urgent, and in some respects the most useful form of recognition, would be to pursue areas of policy and service provision where the State and society have not yet adequately met the practical needs of victims. This includes a review of the Criminal Injuries Scheme, the effective targeting of the special needs of victims as a specific sub-set of TSN, establishment of a Champion within Government and greater practical help on counselling and advice. All have PE implications, particularly the suggested review of Criminal Injuries Compensation and the implication that more should be done to provide better financial provision for some victims for whom the present scheme is seen to fail. This, the suggested Northern Ireland Memorial, and support for the voluntary sector is likely to give rise to significant PE implications. It also means that the Secretary of State is unlikely to go ahead with a Tariff Scheme thus foregoing the significant PE savings which would emerge once the upfront costs had been covered.
3. While the report contains several poems and other verse, it is totally silent on the costs of what it recommends or where these might be found. Despite this, I suspect that the Secretary of State will find it difficult to resist in current circumstances. There is certainly a case for greater practical (especially medical) help for those who are continuing to suffer, although the benefits of other proposals are more problematic. The £5m which the Prime Minister has apparently agreed should be provided from the Reserve will be a useful first step but other costs are bound to arise for the Block. I doubt if any of the proposals will have much attraction to the US Government but some of the suggestions mentioned in the report might be runners eg the proposed Memorial Appeal for young people whose educational and other prospects have been affected by violence, the Trauma Centre and associated research, Truth and Reconciliation Commission (but this might never get off the ground), the proposed NI Memorial, Chair of Peace at QUB/UU.

J Sullivan
J G SULLIVAN

ER
13/5 - Mr Rooney
To note PE implications
VA 12/5

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS WITH POSSIBLE PE IMPLICATIONS

- Review of the Criminal Injuries Compensation Scheme - despite recognising that the NI scheme is considered generous compared to England, the report argues that certain aspects of the law and procedures merit further serious review to ensure that compensation to victims was “adequate”. The report mentions concerns that some deaths/injuries are “worth less” than others and argues that the present scheme may not be “equitable” to all those affected. The clear impression is that more should be paid to some of those who receive no or small compensation at present and the costs of the scheme are likely to increase. It will also make the early introduction of a tariff scheme very unlikely.
- Employers should be sensitive to needs of victims and public sector should “make allowances for those who face special difficulties”. Not likely to have major PE implications but will create further difficulties in the employment/equality field.
- Regard for circumstances of victims should be made a specific sub-set of the TSN objective, to be acknowledged in the CSR. A designated senior officer “in one of the central Departments” should become a Victims’ “Champion” to ensure a better co-ordinated approach to the problems of victims within Government.
- Need for counselling and longer term support and in particular a recommendation that Government should implement a recent DHSS report “Living with the Trauma of the Troubles”. This has a long list of recommendations eg manpower review of the psychology service, training for counsellors, better information on what is available and where, additional funding for crisis support teams, review of clinical psychology services, 24 hour confidential telephone etc etc. Additional PE costs are likely but may not be significant.
- Victims should receive, at lowest minimum, as much help as former prisoners in terms of rehabilitation, future employment.
- Funding for organisations such as WAVE to provide comprehensive services throughout NI ie capital development and additional staffing.
- Longer term funding of voluntary organisations which currently depend on the time limited EU and IFI support. Clear PE implications.
- A Peace and Reconciliation budget within the Block - “room must be made for this in determining overall financial priorities”.
- Establishment of a Standing Conference of Organisations Supporting the Victims of Violence, as a collective voice to raise the profile of this issue.

- In longer term, the establishment of a Standing Commission for the Protection of Victims or an office of Protector or Ombudsman for Victims to be responsible for keeping under review the adequacy of services and the availability of advice.
- Higher funding priority for relief of pain and establishment of more Pain Relief Centres, with local universities creating a new focus of research excellence in this area.
- Establishment of a dedicated Trauma Centre and a review of the availability of residential psychiatric care for young people.
- More satisfactory prosthesis and wheelchairs matched to specific needs of patients.
- Possible establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission but stops short of firm recommendation.
- Sympathetic consideration should be given to representations to Government for special help to those displaced from farms/homes in border area. Clear PE implications.
- Creation of an appropriate record and archive of individual deaths, when the time is right.
- Establishment of a Memorial Appeal, with a contribution from Government to assist young people whose educational or other prospects have been affected by the troubles. This could subsume the Spirit of Enniskillen Trust and could extend to children of soldiers killed or injured and possibly even be given an international charter, so that people in the Republic and elsewhere could also benefit.
- Government should support “mutual understanding” activities in GB eg in Warrington.
- Notes but does not endorse various suggestions from public for a Memorial, award of George Cross or some form of civic recognition to Northern Ireland, minute of prayer on Radio Ulster (similar to Angelus on RTE) etc.
- Memorial and Reconciliation Day (with buttonhole based on flower of gorse or whin bush!!).
- Consideration of a Northern Ireland Memorial in the form of a “beautiful and useful building within a peaceful and harmonious garden” with works of art contributed by countries outside NI. It would not feature the names of individuals or of specific events. Government is likely to be asked to acquire and maintain the Memorial along the lines of the War Graves Commission.