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Consultative Group into the Past to be disbanded

Denis Bradley has warned that if the proposals of the Consultative Commission into the Past are ignored, there could be 30 years of public enquiries.

Monday, 30 March 2009

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Mr Bradley, who led a group which examined the legacy of 30 years of violence in Northern Ireland, was speaking at the British/Irish Inter-parliamentary Assembly in Donegal.

He made a final appeal to the Secretary of State to have its recommendations implemented.

The Consultative Group on the Past called for a 'recognition payment' of £12,000 to be given to each victim of the Troubles.

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In recent years the Irish Government paid out €15,000 to up to 300 of its citizens who were victims of the violence.

"We cannot see victims being recognised in the south and not in the north," Mr Bradley said.

Mr Bradley and his co-chair, Lord Robin Eames were making their final public appearance before their Consultative Group on the Past is disbanded.

Their report, which was compiled after 18 months of consultation, is being considered by the Secretary of State and by the Irish Government.

They told the British-Irish Parliamentary Assembly (Bipa) that the British government would be making a very significant gesture by agreeing to the recognition payment.

'Tears'

But DUP MLA Jim Wells said the unionist community was appalled by the principle of recognition payments.

"To compare the Shankill butchers and bombers and the Shankill victims sticks in the throat of most ordinary people," he told delegates.

"To say the tears of the mother of an IRA terrorist shot by the police are the same as the tears for an RUC officer shot by a terrorist is wrong."

He called for a new definition for victims of the Troubles.

But Mr Bradley said: "Working class unionism has no difficulty with this but middle unionism doesn't want to grasp this nettle."

He added: "It can be a very healing gesture that after these conflicts, you have to give recognition to the victims."

Lord Eames claimed politicians and others had lobbied his group for recognition payments for individual victims' groups.

"We didn't pluck it out of thin air. The issue came up from a very wide section of opinion that we were consulting with," he explained.

Mr Bradley also said the Historical Enquiries Team and the Police Ombudsman would both cost £100m over the

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next five years.

He also claimed that up to 300 police officers will be spending their entire time dealing with historical cases, which will also cost £100m.

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