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Secretary of State hasn't totally ruled out £12,000 victims payouts

Thursday, 5 March 2009

Northern Ireland Secretary Shaun Woodward has failed to rule out a £12,000 payment being made in the future to all families bereaved as a result of the Troubles.

Mr Woodward said it was right for the Government to say "at this time" it ruled it out. But challenged by shadow Northern Ireland secretary Owen Paterson to permanently reject the "repugnant" payments, Mr Woodward said politicians had to be "extremely careful" before attacking the concept.

Last month, the controversial proposal, one of 30 contained in a report compiled by the Consultative Group on the Past, was condemned by some victims' families. Critics said it lent a "moral equivalence" between murderers and their victims. Mr Woodward said at the time the idea was "interesting" but the time was not right to go ahead with it.

At Commons' Question Time yesterday, Mr Woodward said the report, compiled by Lord Eames and Denis Bradley, had dealt with "some of the most difficult challenges facing Northern Ireland today".

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