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Politics

'Don't mention the war', 2,000 letters tell Eames

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Thursday, February 21, 2008
By Chris Thornton

The group exploring ways of dealing with Ulster's past has received the same five letters more than 2,000 times - part of a 'co-ordinated campaign' against suggestions of a terrorist amnesty or declaring the Troubles 'a war'.

The Government revealed that the Eames-Bradley group received 2,061 "similarly worded letters" in what it believes was an organised campaign.

There were five versions of the pre-printed letters, and each was received about 400 times, signed by different individuals.

DUP MP Jeffrey Donaldson, who obtained the figures from the Government, said the letters showed the strength of opposition to proposals for an amnesty or declaration that the Troubles was a war.

As well as those letters, the Consultative Group on the Past received 245 "written submissions" during public consultation.

The group - headed by former Church of Ireland primate Lord Eames and former Policing Board vice chairman Denis Bradley - is preparing its report.

The group was set up by the Government last year to make recommendations on how to deal with the past. As well as receiving written submissions, it undertook a series of public meetings last month.

In January sources reported it was considering an amnesty for terrorism and any crimes committed by police and soldiers during the Troubles. There were also reports that it might reclassify the conflict as a war.

Those two points were brought up in the letters received by the group. A spokesman

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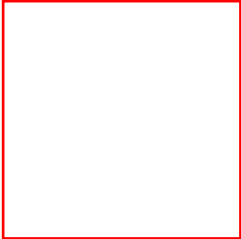
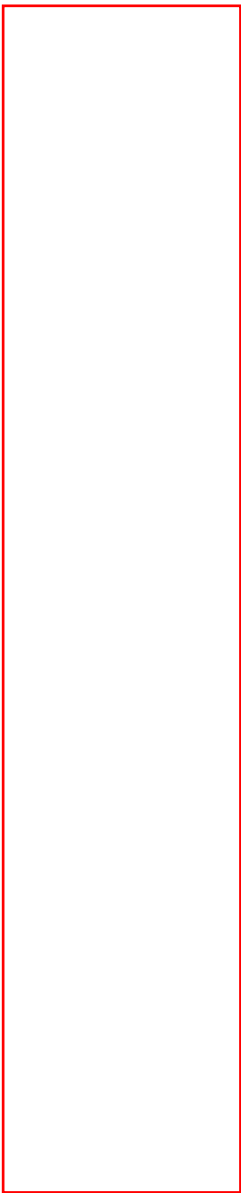
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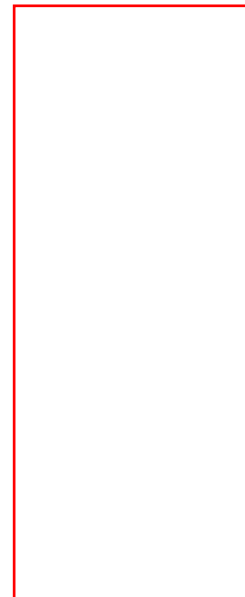
for the Consultative Group on the Past said all members of the group were aware of them and had "read them all" .

Mr Donaldson, the Lagan Valley MP, said it is "entirely valid that people who feel strongly enough to send a letter" should have their view taken into account. He said: "Whether or not those views are expressed in a similarly worded letter that may or may not be part of a co-ordinated campaign is neither here nor there."

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