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Wednesday, January 28, 2009

## Troubles legacy proposals to cost £300m

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GERRY MORIARTY, Northern Editor

THE CONSULTATIVE Group on the Past has defended the proposed £12,000 payment to the relatives of everyone killed in the Troubles which is the most controversial element of its proposals, published today, on how to address the legacy of the Troubles.

The joint heads of the group, Lord (Robin) Eames and Denis Bradley last night issued a statement urging everyone carefully to consider and reflect on the findings and recommendations in their 190-page report.

While several politicians – most recently the DUP First Minister Peter Robinson – and editorial writers have condemned the proposed payment to those bereaved in the Troubles, Mr Bradley defended it. “This is not about compensation nor is it about financial reward. It is a small gesture by our society to acknowledge the grief of the families left devastated by the last 40 years,” he said.

“Over the past number of days we have heard some victims’ groups saying we don’t want money, we want justice. Others have said we don’t want money, we want truth. They are right to say that and our report will reflect both points of view,” Mr Bradley said.

“Equally they have to respect those who told us that they wanted neither justice nor truth. Others that we met want recognition by our society of their loss and suffering,” he said.

Mr Bradley acknowledged that the payment would only recognise the suffering of the bereaved families. “Many others have been left injured and scarred, both physically and psychologically, by the violence. Their needs are equally important and will be addressed in our report,” he said.

The Eames-Bradley group took their idea for the £12,000 payment from a similar “acknowledgement payment” of €15,000 made in the Republic by the Government’s Remembrance Commission. This £12,000 payment will cover those bereaved from Britain and Northern Ireland and those who received the €15,000 will not be covered by the scheme, it is understood.

Eames-Bradley propose a new legacy commission to oversee how the legacy of the Troubles will be comprehensively addressed. Their recommendations are estimated to cost £300 million over its proposed five-year life.

The former Church of Ireland primate Lord Eames said members of the group knew it would be extremely difficult for “our society to escape the dark shadows of the past”. He said the report would “set out a whole range of issues that will have to be addressed if we are to build the shared and reconciled future that we all want to see”.

“We have been meeting, listening and reflecting upon what we have been told over the last 18 months and today we will set out how we believe the past must be dealt with. At the heart of those proposals will be justice, truth and importantly reconciliation,” he said. “It is a challenging and complex report. In many ways it reflects the opposing views of our community but we have to find a way of moving to the future together,” added Lord Eames.

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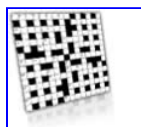
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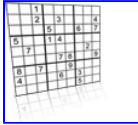
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