

Mr. Matthews 2/5  
Please file (CCOSP)  
General.  
Hill.  
12/5

Mr. Mills

Reference

1. Miss Bellin Jan 9/5  
2. The Keeping of  
to account the plan.  
RR  
8/5  
Please keep me posted if anything were arranged if possible. In 9/5

Secretary

JOY-RIDING CHILDREN

1. I have been concerned for some time about the emerging phenomenon of car-stealing and joy riding children, particularly in West Belfast where some children seem to seek the added thrill of driving through a security road block. Two children have been killed in such escapades, which may exemplify a particularly dangerous form of Russian roulette.
2. Public discussion of the problem has tended to centre on the security aspects - on the dilemmas such behaviour presents for soldiers manning road blocks, or on whether the security forces were or were not justified in opening fire in specific circumstances. There is of course a security problem, but it would also, I believe, be useful to give consideration to the underlying problems of child behaviour and attitudes.
3. I am not suggesting that there is necessarily any clearly observable pattern or any easily discernable answer to this problem. I doubt if it is in any case possible to discover surrogates which carry the same degree of danger or risk. We should, however, try to find out more about the non-security aspects of the problem (as a means indeed to resolving the dilemma of the security forces) in the hope of finding some way in which the influence of parents, schools, churches and community groups may be harnessed to the resources of statutory and voluntary agencies in order to divert and deter children from such criminal and dangerous activities.
4. The Black Report lays great stress on preventive strategies. However the problem cannot wait for the implementation of Black.
5. CCOSP, as you know, was set up originally as a result of an inter-departmental study of the problem of alienation among children. I suggest it might be appropriate for the Committee to return to this subject with particular reference to the particular <sup>manipulation</sup> of anti social behaviour in stealing cars and crashing road blocks in West Belfast.
6. If Mr Alison thought that advice on this subject would be helpful, I would be glad to try to set up a study. What I would like to do with the co-operation of CES would be to get together a group of 12-15 people drawn from DENI, DHSS, NIO, Probation, Education Board, EHSSB, RUC, CES with perhaps a behavioural scientist, a community worker and a priest. They would form a one-day workshop, without publicity or fuss and would hopefully indicate some of the ways in which the various agencies could co-operate in practical preventive measures, and some of the areas for further studies. Throughout I would wish the emphasis to be on practical short term remedies or ameliorative action. I would suggest a very tight time table leading to an early meeting and a quick report to Minister.
7. If you think well of the idea, perhaps we could discuss how best to proceed.

M N HAYES  
7 May 1980