

Mr Oliver was concerned that the financial and other difficulties had led to apathy and disillusionment amongst certain voluntary group workers, with a danger that in some areas voluntary services may cease to operate. This was happening at a time when the Government was looking to the voluntary sector to assume a greater burden for community services.

3. The **Departmental Officers** present explained that:-

- (a) DENI grants for voluntary and community groups were being paid to all District Councils, except Craigavon and that during the financial year 1986/87 only approximately £6,000 grants were not claimed out of a total provision of £450,000;
- (b) the Government's policy of intervention under local government emergency powers only applied where essential Council services or jobs were under threat and as a measure of last resort. On those occasions where such intervention was necessary however the person appointed had also taken opportunity to approve grants due to voluntary and community bodies;
- (c) the Departments and Ministers concerned were very sympathetic to the problems facing the voluntary sector;
- (d) the funding of such groups however was a local government function and so it was for District Councillors to assume full responsibility for their actions.

4. During subsequent discussion, it was agreed that the areas of immediate concern to the voluntary bodies were:-

- (a) the specific problems in Craigavon; and

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- (b) the inability of the voluntary sector to take new initiatives and the inability of new groups to receive priming grants.
5. The merits and difficulties in arranging alternative or supplementary funding for the voluntary sector organisations were considered at length in light of current responsibilities and policies. There was discussion of the four alternatives proposed in Mr Oliver's letter of 9 February but the difficulties in each option were also recognised.
6. In conclusion, it was agreed that:-
- (a) within the terms of current policy about Government intervention in Council areas, where such action was necessary consideration would continue to be given to the interests of the voluntary sector;
 - (b) NICVA would consider the information and explanations given during the meeting and would also consider whether it was possible to suggest alternative ways of funding new initiatives and of making finance available in the Craigavon area; and
 - (c) NICVA would then write further to Central Secretariat with any proposals which they might produce. These would be considered collectively by the Departments involved before further detailed policy and advice was submitted to Ministers.

Central Secretariat

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