

RW/326/90

FROM: R WILSON
AS CENT SEC
DATE: 5 OCTOBER 1990

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- cc PS/MOS (B & L) - B [3&4]
- PS/PUS (B & L) - B [5&6]
- PS/Sir K Bloomfield - B [7]
- Mr Chilcot - B [8]
- Mr Ledlie - B [9]
- Mr Alston - B [10]
- Mr Wood (B & L) - B [11&12]
- Mr Cole - B [13]
- Mr Hamilton - B [14]
- Mr Petch - B [15]
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cc list Annexes B-D follow separately

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B & L) - B [1&2]

GLOR NA NGAEL (WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE)

1. The purpose of this submission is to point up the key issues to be addressed in the further consideration of the Glor na nGael (WBC) case.

2. Background

The Secretary of State knows the history of the case and is familiar with the separate advice on which the decision was taken. Since the decision to withdraw funding was conveyed to the WBC on 24 August it has been attacked by the WBC itself and by a range of individuals and interest groups. A synopsis of the comments received is at Annex A which also lists the various correspondents. Media attention has remained high over the last 6 weeks.

3. Key issues

The principal issue is whether the changes in the Management Committee of the organisation notified in their letter, and the subsequent security advice, warrant a change in the original

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decision. Beyond that there are 2 further issues, namely, (i) are there any other political or policy considerations which should weigh with the Secretary of State in considering the case; and (ii) the presentational consequences and options should the decision be changed or reaffirmed. These are dealt with in turn.

4. Security assessment

The crucial consideration in this context is not association with Sinn Fein (section 19 of the Constitution Act is a safeguard here) but the closeness of a person's links with a paramilitary organisation. Despite several changes in the Management Committee the latest security advice confirms that some worrying influences remain and points to a continued risk that the provision of support "would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly". This is reinforced by the additional advice on one of the groups receiving support from the WBC and on which the Secretary of State will almost certainly be invited to make a separate decision under the 1985 policy since the group is an applicant for other public funds.

5. Other political or policy considerations

In addition to security considerations there are other considerations which are relevant:

- i. Mr Needham's concern that the WBC decision has served to alienate even responsible Catholic/Nationalist opinion in West Belfast and to undermine previously hard won trust in Ministers and officials, both of which are crucial to the success of MBW. Others have made the same points;
- ii. Dr Mawhinney has similar concerns about the wider political consequences of the decision but does not suggest that they should necessarily outweigh the security considerations.

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Those with a community relations/Irish language interest are certainly fearful that the decision will adversely affect earlier progress in breaking down cultural and sectarian barriers and in dispelling suspicion and mistrust about HMG's attitude to the Irish language;

- iii. the vulnerability of the 1985 policy itself if it continues to come under such critical scrutiny. The decision has revived criticism of the policy and procedures under which it was taken. The main points of criticism are the refusal to give reasons for the decision, the absence of an initial hearing or appeal procedures, and the general secrecy surrounding the operation of the policy. There is also concern that the decision effectively labels those involved as having paramilitary links and makes them potential targets. There are also, indications that in this case a greater than usual risk of an application for judicial review, due largely to the public perception of the body and the range and standing of its supporters;

- iv. the credibility and future operation of the 1985 policy if the decision is reversed. In a sense this is the other side of the coin to (iii) above. A change of decision will not necessarily mean that the current criticism of policy will stop. Reversal of the decision will be seen as a vindication of Glor na nGael, and of its vigorous opposition to the decision, and will almost certainly guarantee that any future decision under the 1985 Policy Statement will be vigorously challenged. There is also the danger that the WBC, and related bodies, will regard themselves untouchable under the policy (this is not to say that a decision should not be changed if this is justified by a change in circumstances). Even more importantly it could indicate that the policy and/or the procedures are basically flawed. Finally it could give rise to accusations of weakness on the part of Government in

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tackling paramilitary exploitation of community groups.

6. There is clearly an argument that continued success on the MBW front, encouragement of the nationalist aspiration and identity by legitimate means, and the promotion of mutual understanding and tolerance, could be more effective long-term safeguards against paramilitary exploitation of community group activities than the 1985 Policy Statement. It does not necessarily follow, however, that where there is a potential conflict the former policy initiatives should be given pre-eminence. There are other considerations, not least the fairly absolute terms of the 1985 statement and the vulnerability of Government to accusations that it is prepared to tolerate public funds being used to support or enhance the standing of paramilitary groups.

7. The extent to which other policy objectives should influence the Secretary of State's decision in a particular case was discussed in the context of the earlier review paper but no firm conclusions were reached. However if wider political/policy considerations are to be given increased weight under the 1985 policy we must recognise that the WBC case is by no means unique. (For example in the recent Shankill case, which ultimately did not proceed, the Secretary of State was prepared to contemplate the withdrawal of funding despite almost certain vigorous protest from Unionists - also relevant in the MBW context - and other responsible people involved in the management of the body.) The introduction of other policy considerations must also increase the danger of inconsistency in application of the 1985 policy and this could be important in the context of judicial review.

8. **Presentational consequences and options**
In addressing this aspect we need to bear in mind that the West Belfast Committee differs from many other community groups in that it is part of a larger, well regarded, organisation and operates within a well developed national and international

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network of language and cultural organisations. This fact, and the promotional role of the organisation, means that the WBC is better placed than most other community groups to mount an effective publicity campaign. We should not be surprised, therefore, by the scale and effectiveness of current protest nor underestimate its ability to keep the issue in front of the media. (See extract of today's Irish News at Annex B)

9. There is little doubt that reaffirmation of the original decision will lead to renewed protests and a sustained campaign against the decision and the 1985 policy itself. Media interest is likely to be high initially, but may wane after a period (though any further cases may re-open the issue). There will also be Parliamentary interest and an adjournment debate must be a possibility. If the Conway Mill case is any guide the US dimension will be brought into play; there are already signs of this happening. Finally an application for a judicial review would certainly keep the issue alive.
10. A reversal of the decision will also make the headlines but coverage can be expected to be more short lived. There is always the possibility however that a WBC campaign to reverse the 1985 policy would keep the issue alive. Reversal of the decision might also lead to Unionist, and possibly also back bench, criticism of Government's handling of this case and of its lack of determination to face up to paramilitarism, though again this is likely to be short lived.
11. There are however detailed considerations which come into play depending on the nature of the Secretary of State's decision. If the decision is reaffirmed the following considerations are pertinent:

- i. **Justification**

- As with the original decision this is best done by reference to the 1985 Parliamentary Statement, though it is

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for consideration whether we should seek to dispel more publicly than hitherto the misconception that the statement only deals with the diversion of money. In this context the Secretary of State's view on the acceptability for funding purposes of one of the WBC's client groups (see separate advice) could be significant since its exclusion would no doubt cause some people to have second thoughts about the justification for the original decision. It has to be said, however, that others will have difficulty in seeing how support to a nursery group could enhance the standing of a paramilitary organisation. Nevertheless, reaffirmation of the decision particularly if accompanied by a decision to withdraw funds from one of the client groups would be a demonstration of confidence in the original decision and of its resolve to tackle the problem of paramilitary exploitation. Under this scenario the police authorisation of the street collection will remain problematic (note: scheduled for 10 October);

ii. Impact on other policy areas

Reaffirmation of the decision could of course increase the difficulties in other policy areas, notably MBW and on the cultural traditions/Irish language front. However we must be careful not to be carried away by the range and volume of criticism. An examination of the representations received confirms that M O Muilleoir is the only WBC member of whom people are in any sense suspicious (also confirmed in the "Fortnight" excerpt at Annex C): everyone else appears to view the organisation as reputable and above board. This includes several Catholic clergy in the area, who should be in touch with what is going on, and several members of the Ultach Trust who have been in close contact with the WBC (though the Trust makes the point that the WBC has attracted political activists). On this basis and if the separate advice is to be believed it could be said that the representations received reflect only a superficial

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knowledge of the organisation. (The other side of the argument, however, is that despite the untoward influences in the organisation and evidence of exploitation there is certainly no public enhancement of the standing of a paramilitary organisation.)

It is also the case that much of the criticism of the decision wrongly interprets it as applying to Glor na nGael and not simply to the West Belfast Committee. It has also wrongly focussed on the Irish language dimension. It should certainly be possible to dispel this misconception with more pro-active publicity. As for the MBW dimension it is debatable whether there will be any lasting damage since the stakes are too high for responsible Catholic opinion in the area to distance themselves from the initiative. It should be possible, even by contrasting the amount of resources involved in MBW as compared to that going into the WBC, to dispel any notion that Government's commitment to West Belfast is in any sense diminished.

iii. Impact on 1985 policy

Reaffirmation of the decision will virtually guarantee that the 1985 policy will continue to come under attack. We should not underestimate the WBC's ability to keep the issue alive both in the media and in Parliament. There is also a danger that this issue will push the WBC towards other opponents of the policy including Conway Mill interests. The involvement of Mr Quinton Oliver of NICVA is also worrying given NICVA's role in the voluntary sector in NI. Nevertheless, we have been over this ground before and both the policy and procedures involved have come through unscathed. This is due largely to a refusal to be drawn into debate on procedures, the information on which decisions are taken or on the 1985 Policy Statement itself. The down side is that the policy has remained shrouded in secrecy and has left the field free for those

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opposed to the policy and resulted in little public understanding or sympathy for Government's position. An uncertain feature in all of this, of course, is how we would fare if the case came to judicial review and how this might in turn impact on the policy itself.

In this context a decision by the Secretary of State to withhold funds from the WBC's client group will narrow the focus of attention and will be seen by some as tantamount to targeting specific individuals. There is no way of avoiding this short of not applying the policy but the Secretary of State should be aware of the very real dangers on this front and the difficulty in defending this position. If anything untoward were to happen to such individuals there would be a clamour for the policy to be changed: it could also expose officials dealing with groups on the ground to very real risk.

- iv. Should the decision be reaffirmed it is clearly imperative that Government takes the initiative in presentational terms, particularly regarding the treatment of the Irish language, and in the context of MBW. It is more difficult to do so on the 1985 policy itself but this should be examined further. Aside from the media dimension we might also take the initiative in ensuring that key opinion formers in the community understand the basis of the Government's decision (though obviously not the specific grounds on which it was taken). This probably means Ministers or senior officials speaking privately to people like Dr Hayes, Dr Hawthorne of the Community Relations Council, Bishop Daly and other influential contacts.

As in any case in which funding is withdrawn we should also attempt to ensure that the earlier support is not lost to the area concerned. Ordinarily this means identifying some other body through which to channel assistance. It also

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pre-supposes that the ACE workers or the nursery group involved will co-operate, which has not happened so far. In this particular case, however, the Irish language dimension imposes additional constraints, as does the evident anxiety on the part the Ultach Trust that their position could be compromised if they undertook this role (the comments from M O Muilleoir at Annex D are relevant). Other may take the same view but if the Secretary of State decides to continue to withhold funding from the WBC the Central Community Relations Unit, and other informed individuals in this field, could be asked to help identify some other vehicle through which support might be channelled. This would need to be done discreetly. In the end much will depend on how important the prospect of further funding is to the bodies concerned.

15. If the decision is reversed the following considerations/presentational difficulties need to be addressed;

i. Justification

This will be problematic and obviously some gloss will need to be found, but as on other occasions the best course is probably to say as little as possible. Many people will assume that O Muilleoir was the problem or, perhaps, Ms Andrews, who has since left the Committee: both might feel vulnerable as a consequence and we will need to avoid any suggestion that they are being pinpointed. Whatever form of words is used the position will be complicated further if the Secretary of State decides to act on the separate advice on one of the WBC's client groups, since this would be seen as moving the goal posts and as attacking both the language and children. This latter difficulty is only avoided if no action is taken against the client group;

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ii. Impact on other policy areas

The likelihood is that a reversal of the decision would restore any previous loss of credibility in other policy areas, and indeed could enhance Government's standing by demonstrating its willingness to remedy a "wrong" decision. Unionists might see it differently however;

iii. Impact on 1985 policy

Reversal of the decision without some obvious justification will simply encourage people in the belief that the original decision, and the information on which it was based, was wrong. This could increase the criticism of the decision making process and of the policy itself. It could also feed the idea that the decision was politically based (the police position on the street collection has already given rise to this accusation). There is little doubt, also, that any further decision under the policy will be vigorously challenged unless the link with a paramilitary organisation is pretty obvious. The benefit of reversal in terms of the 1985 policy are likely to be marginal;

iv. Need for additional safeguards re use of funds

Should the Secretary of State come to the conclusion that it is more desirable, politically, to restore funding to the WBC than to reaffirm the decision there remains a problem of how best to minimise the risk of public funds being used to enhance the standing or influence of PIRA. One way is obviously to block any Government money going to the particular client group mentioned in the separate advice. This would also alert those in Glor na nGael who may be unaware of the problem that they need to be more careful. Alongside this there have been suggestions that perhaps some responsible individuals could act as guarantors for the proper use of the money. However this assumes that the guarantors would be able to identify paramilitary influence among potential recipients, which is

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unlikely. There is a further complication in that we appear to be expecting completely innocent people to become involved with some very unsavoury individuals which is hardly reasonable. On the face of it finding a middle course will be difficult.

17. Conclusion

The objective of this paper has been to expose the policy and presentational issues involved and to assist further discussion of the issue, rather than to draw conclusions. Whatever decision is made there will be problems but the crucial consideration is the weight the Secretary of State attaches to the separate security advice as against wider policy considerations. A decision on this point will largely govern what happens thereafter.

R. WILSON

CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

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ANNEX A

GLOR NA NGAEL (WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE) : REPRESENTATIONS

Representations to date cover a wide spectrum: MPs, TDs, Catholic clergy including Bishop C Daly, the NI Community Relations Council, Ultach Trust, NIVT, language interest groups throughout the UK and beyond, certain US interests including the Mayor of Boston, Local Government interests in NI and various individuals including pupils of St Paul's High School, Bessbrook.

Many of the representations interpret the decision as an attack on the Irish language and culture and simply see it as the latest manifestation either of Government neglect in this area or of a deliberate policy to undermine both the language and culture. Others have focussed on the 1985 policy generally and particularly the secrecy attaching to the decision taking process and challenge the basis of the Government's decision. Some see the policy as misplaced, some as an attack on human rights, and some as effectively targeting particular groups for unwelcome attention from the "other side". Many see it as counterproductive to Government's longer-term objectives on the community relations and MBW fronts and as providing Sinn Fein with a golden propaganda platform. Most see Glor na nGael as a thoroughly good organisation which has been seriously wronged.

Many of the correspondents seem to interpret the 1985 Policy Statement as simply addressing the diversion of funds to paramilitary organisations rather than the potential exploitation of community groups to enhance the influence and standing of such organisations.

In terms of specific representations the NI Community Relations Council have expressed concern about the 1985 policy and think the decision counterproductive in the wider community relations field. To their knowledge the group has been trying to shake off more undesirable elements. These considerations are also reflected in

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the representations from the Ultach Trust which considers that the decision puts bodies such as the Ultach Trust, which has been encouraging Glor na nGael to distance themselves from PSF influence, in a difficult position. Again the Trust questions the accuracy of the Secretary of State's decision. This is also the view of Bishop Daly who believes that the Secretary of State may have been acting on out of date information.

The decision has also provided a focus for criticism of the 1985 policy on the grounds that the organisation does not know the charges against it and is denied any opportunity to answer such charges. Thus people like Quinton Oliver of NICVA are using the decision as a platform from which to attack the policy generally.

Many of the individual comments focus on the Irish language dimension, as do the representations from language groups throughout the UK.

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REPRESENTATIONS ON GLOR NA NGAEL (WEST BELFAST COMMITTEE)

Mr J Marshall MP
Mr R Stott CBE MP
Mr S Mallon MP
Ms C Short MP
Mr Julian Critchley MP
Mr G Adams MP
Mr A M Dukes TD
Mr D Spring TD
The Most Rev Cahal B Daly
Mr D Cooke
Mr J Christopher Napier (Taxing Master in the High Court and Chairman
of Ultach Trust)
Dr M Hayes and Dr J Hawthorne - Community Relations Council and
Cultural Traditions Sub Committee
Mayor Raymond L Flynn (Boston)
Dr J Hendron - SDLP
Councillor S Lynch - Workers Party (Chairperson)
Mr J P McKinney (Omagh District Council) - Clerk
Rev T G Toner - Parish Priest West Belfast
Mr B Campfield - Belfast & District Trades' Union Council
Mr J Nathan - Private individual (Irish speaker)
Mr P MacRannall - Irish in Britain Representation Group
Mrs J McKenna - Pupil at Glor na n Gael Irish class in Ulster
People's College (a Protestant)
Mr D Clayton - Community Enterprise Group West Belfast (involves
Father Matt Wallace)
Mrs R G McAloon - Irish pupil at Ulster People's College in Glor na
nGael class
Mrs Ruth C P Hume - Ulster People's College - Protestant students of
Irish
Mr J B Moffett - Celtic League, IOM
Mr S M Phadraig - Gaelic Athletic Association, Co Tyrone
Mr M Allen - Irish National Organisation of the Unemployed
Ms L Burnett - Lecale Gaelic Society, Strangford
Mr I Williams - Celtic League, Cornwall
Ms N Wilson - National Union of Students, Wales
Mr R Hughes - Christ's College, Cambridge - undergraduate
Mr S Eaves)
Mr P Bradley) Welsh language group
Mr J Kane - Private individual
Mr A Heusaff - Celtic League, Co Galway
Ms Cristl Jerry - Celtic League, IOM
Mr M Phillips - Celtic League, Wales
Mr D Fear - Celtic League, Wales
Mr C O Baoill - Down District Council - SDLP Councillor
Pupils of St Paul's High School, Bessbrook
Ms W Brown
Mr S Sheridan - Private individual
Rev P McWilliams - Parish Priest, West Belfast
Mr P Sweeney - NI Voluntary Trust
Mr P Campbell - Union of Students in Ireland-Dublin
Ms K Lee - Celtic Network, USA
Mr M Miller - Celtic interest

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Mr S Lennon - Prisoner, Maze
Ms P Robinson - Womens Irish Speaking Group (Coiste na nBan)
Mr K McDonnell - Islington Teachers' Association
Dr A McCloskey)
Dr J Hill) Private individuals
Mr I McArthur - Scottish resident in NI: voluntary community worker
Dr R Blaney - Ultach Trust
Ms E Ni Bhroinn - Member of National Curriculum Working Party for
Irish in Irish medium schools
Ms D Floyd - Community Education organiser: Ulster People's College
Mr S Bennett - IOM (Celtic League)
Mr D McHugh - Belfast Irish speaking schools
Dr G Broderick - Celtic Studies, University of Hannover

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of the loyalist in, Ulster In- e, has criticised ed dumping of r material at a o miles from 1. ticism was ex- n a statement e Portadown gisation who ended to do all in er to commit is fully to the nst the proposed of toxic waste in y. fso said they will th all interested until our environ- save from the of this govern-

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poet goes erary prize

RY journalist is in a top award from ican Cultural

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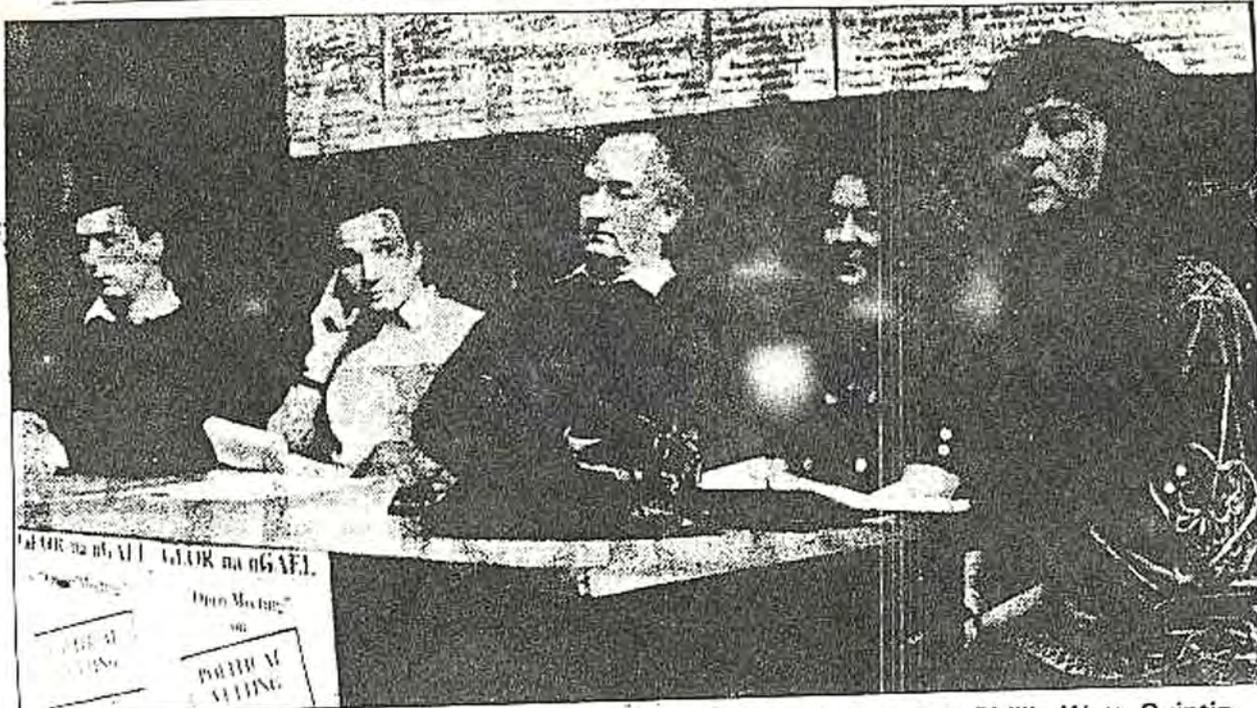
ssor James Clark rcribed "The Curs- one" as "quite ing with no parallel rn writing."

park opens

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park has been ed as a major holi- tre with facilities for nd trippers and travellers.

Arane Boys Band,



● Attending the meeting to highlight the axeing of funds are, from left, Phillip Watt, Quintin Oliver, Seamas Mac Seain, Patricia McKeown and Noirin ui Chleirigh. Photograph by Hugh Russell.

Glor blacklisting 'a threat to freedom of all groups'

By Henry McDonald

BLACKLISTING Glor na nGael threatens the future freedom and independence of all voluntary groups in the North, a leading community activist said yesterday.

Quintin Oliver, director of the Northern Ireland Council on Voluntary Action, claimed the government's decision to axe funding to the Irish language group because of alleged paramilitary links was "immoral and illogical".

Speaking at a Glor na nGael meeting in Queen's University, Mr Oliver said the allegations levelled at the language body was an "abuse of monopoly power" by the British Government.

The meeting at Queen's was the first round of a nationwide speaking tour by Glor na nGael to highlight its campaign for the return of state funding, axed by Secretary of State Peter Brooke in August.

Noirin ui Chleirigh, chairwoman of

Glor na nGael's West Belfast commit- tee, told the meeting that the group's role was "to promote the Irish language and culture".

"We have reached out to the peo- ple of West Belfast and beyond," she said. "Our classes have been held in venues accessible to everyone from the Falls Road to the Ulster People's Col- lege and we will maintain this ap- proach."

Ms Ui Chleirigh revealed that prior to the withdrawal of state funds to Glor na nGael, the Department of Health and Social Services had been negotiating with the group to fund nurseries the group had been running.

"As I have said many times, Glor na nGael has no party connections. To say anything else is simply not true.

"We know of no justifiable reason for the treatment we have received from the Northern Ireland Office and again I call on Mr Brooke to return our funding and give us the justice that we feel we are entitled to," she said.

Phillip Watt, from the Campaign Against Political Vetting, said the removal of funds from Glor na nGael was part of a five-year campaign against a number of community and voluntary groups across the North.

"A number of those groups who have been vetted live in fear of assassination after being blacklisted by government."

He said that removal of state support and allegations of paramilitary links against Glor na nGael was an offence against "natural justice".

Patricia Mc Keown, of the National Union of Public Employees, and Seamas Mac Seain, editor of the Andersonstown News, also attended yesterday's meeting.

Glor na nGael plans to visit a number of other centres around the North to highlight its case. These include the Newry Arts Centre on October 8, Union Hall, Shipquay Street, Derry, on October 11, and Minor Town Hall, Omagh, on October 11.

Rothmans ready to snap up Carrolls

From Mary Carolan in Dublin

THE troubled Dundalk tobacco firm, P J Carroll, Ireland's 17th largest private company, is likely to be sold to the British-based international tobacco and luxury goods giant, Rothmans, for a sum approaching £120 million.

Carrolls has been operating in Dun- dalk for 150 years following its

tobacco areas, particularly fish-farming in the West of Ireland and a significant investment in a US mail order company.

Carrolls is operating at just over 50 per cent capacity and the firm's share price has tumbled drastically.

It is understood that Rothmans decided to buy Carrolls after a major restructuring of the Carrolls board

has begun the selling-off of all but Car- rolls core tobacco business. The com- pany's office headquarters is to be auc- tioned on October 24.

The Rothmans bid has received the approval of the board of Carrolls and will be put to shareholders with a recommendation for acceptance.

Rothmans is offering to pay 160p for each ordinary share in the firm and £1 for each preference share.

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Just whose side is the NIO on?

THE SECRETARY of state, Peter Brooke, appeared to be tottering as we went to press over his decision to withdraw government funding from the west Belfast Irish-language group Glór na nGael, based on its alleged paramilitary links. The decision baffled observers: the Northern Ireland Office has made much in the past year of its new policy of cultural pluralism and the principal activity of the group is the establishment of Irish-medium nursery schools.

Dublin has expressed concern through its officials in the Maryfield secretariat, while one of Labour's Northern Ireland team, Roger Stott, has written to Mr Brooke demanding an explanation. And a US law professor has agreed to underwrite the cost of a legal challenge.

The west Belfast branch of Glór na nGael, established eight years ago, supervises seven Irish-medium nurseries in the city and until last month employed 19 staff under the Action for Community Employment scheme. It is the ninth community group in the province since 1985 to have had its ACE funding withdrawn over alleged paramilitary connections.

As in all the previous such "political vetting" cases, the NIO has refused to offer any explanation other than to refer to the terse statement to the Commons by the then Ulster secretary, Douglas Hurd, in 1985. Mr Hurd said then that he had received information that "persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups" had sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a "grave risk" that government funding for such groups would further the aims of those organisations, directly or indirectly.

Glór na nGael was stunned by this association—the chair of the west Belfast group, Noirín Ni Chléirigh, said she was "flabbergasted". The only "person" observers could imagine Mr Brooke might have had in mind is a west Belfast Sinn Féin councillor, Mairtin O Muilleoir. If so, the secretary of state's advice was badly out of date: Mr O Muilleoir was at one time secretary of the group, but he no longer holds any office in it and has not even been a member of its committee for some months. In any event, should anyone need reminding, Sinn Féin is still legal.

Just before the announcement was made last month Glór na nGael had received RUC authority for a street collection in the city—and the RUC sent out a clear signal of its position by stressing that that permission still stood. Only a few months ago a life prisoner was given NIO authority to work with the group while on the pre-release "working out" scheme—he was told summarily last month that he would be attached to Glór na nGael no longer. And the group has pursued links with a south Belfast college and a city-centre library to give its classes in the Irish language a cross-sectarian flavour.

The decision attracted a raft of critics—among them the SDLP, the Fine Gael leader, Alan Dukes, the Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action, the Committee on the Administration of Justice, the National Union of Public Employees and the Union of Students in Ireland.

There was considerable dissatisfaction, too, among at least some of those close to government over the episode. One respected insider said: "I think the policy's wrong. I think the application of it in this case is badly wrong." But he thought a "head of steam" would build up and was not despondent about the prospect of change.

Another source with the ear of government spoke of going to "the



highest levels" to protest. "The civil servants don't run with this: they think it's counter-productive," the source said. "The whole thing's ridiculous." Indeed, one senior civil servant appeared to welcome the protests. "I think what they are doing now is the right thing in making lots of representations about it," he said.

It looks now as if Mr Brooke is looking for a face-saving get-out. The NIO has asked Glór na nGael to supply further information about its committee and constitution and to say if it wants its case formally reviewed. Glór may have, to an extent, to play along with this charade. But, for once, is it too much to ask the British establishment to admit that it has been wrong—and say sorry, publicly and with good grace?

The boost this latest gaffe by the secretary of state has given the Provos is serious enough (if not quite in the league of the prime minister's crass stupidity last month in describing the Provos as "at war" with the British government). Should the DPP, as Gerry Adams has already predicted, now defy all the evidence of the post-mortem reports and fail to prosecute the undercover soldiers involved in the killings of the three petty criminals outside a west Belfast bookmaker's in January, then the Provos could legitimately conclude that Christmas has come early.

Robinson for the Park

AUSTIN Currie is a very attractive man, with a record of commitment to accommodation in the north and of stoical resistance to vicious loyalist attacks. Were the contest for the presidency of the republic only between him and Brian 'no problem' Lenihan, one would have no hesitation in endorsing Mr Currie.

But it is Mary Robinson in whom the hopes of progressives must reside in the November election. Ms Robinson has much in her favour. She has a long history of campaigning for the modernisation of the southern state, in such areas as contraception and discrimination against women. She stood out against the forces of clericalist reaction in the two referenda in the 80s—when the SDLP kept its head down. And she was the only major figure in politics in the republic to understand quite why unionists would jump up and down about the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

Given the circumscribed constitutional role of the presidency, Ms Robinson's proposals for constitutional reform give an edge to an election over which Mr Lenihan will endeavour to throw a wet blanket, while Mr Currie risks collapsing into an empty populism. In particular, on the constitutional claim on the north—on which Mr Currie has failed to express a clear position one way or the other—she has elegantly distinguished the legitimacy of the nationalist aspiration to unity by consent from the undemocratic nature of articles two and three as they stand, with her proposal that article one of the Anglo-Irish Agreement (the "consent" clause) be incorporated into them.

Robin Wilson

Translated extracts from Máirtín Ó Muilleoir's Article, "LÁ", 29/8/90 "Cothaíodh Lucht na Gaeilge a n-achmhainn ghrinn in aghaidh ionsaí na nGall".

IRISH SPEAKERS MUST MAINTAIN THEIR SENSE OF HUMOUR IN THE FACE OF BRITISH ATTACK

It is bad news for the Gaels of Ireland (except those who are now recognised as being among Stormont's Irish-language spies) that the Stormont bosses have withdrawn the ACE grants from Glór na nGael in West Belfast.

...Ironically enough this news comes when there is no Republican on the Glór na nGael committee.....

...At times, unexpected people praised Glór na nGael's efforts in the city: Cathal Daly, one of the most anti-Irish people in the country, praised Glór na nGael in a sermon in 1987...

...Of course, it is not true that "paramilitaries" have been using Glór na nGael to their own advantage. For my part - I was the only member of Sinn Féin connected with Glór na nGael in the 80s - I never availed of the Glór na nGael facilities for the use of my party.

It would be difficult for those pointing the finger at Glór na nGael to say that I as much as made a phone call from Glór na nGael offices regarding party affairs while I was associated with the organisation.

I am not a member of Glór na nGael or its committee. My name is not on any bank book or other book. I know that there is no active Republican on the committee.

...Why, then, this attempt to finish off Glór na nGael now? Only the high-ranking officials of the Civil Service, and perhaps ULTACH Trust, know.

...It was certain, however, that the blow would come sooner or later, once the government established ULTACH Trust.....

Of course, there are Gaels, and good Gaels, who are chronically mean-spirited. When Glór na nGael went to ULTACH Trust, the chairperson, who reported it later to the committee, was told that she would not receive any substantial aid "because Máirtín Ó Muilleoir is on the committee".

One may be grateful for the small handout: the official told her that Glór na nGael could expect enough money to buy two tables for the drop-in centre.

The government is depending on the Trust for direction in its Irish language policy. It is difficult, therefore, to believe that the Trust did not keep the Government informed about the "unauthorised" organisations, and, vice versa. It is difficult to believe that the government would withdraw the grant from Glór na nGael without first informing ULTACH Trust.

...God help anyone who thinks that the withdrawal of the grant from Glór na nGael will benefit the Irish language. Those who think that this move will take the control of the Irish language revival from Sinn Féin are even more pathetic. The truth of the matter is that this move will make no difference to Sinn Féin.....