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CONCLUSION BY SIR KENNETH BLOOMFIELD

Government faces, therefore, a major challenge. If it does nothing, community differential and disparities persist and may even widen; the disadvantaged community remains alienated; the relative deprivation continues to feed political extremism.

But, on the other hand, a major programme involving reverse or positive discrimination in favour of the Catholic side of the community would - even if legally possible - anger the Protestant side and simply deepen community divisions.

The way forward requires a programme of affirmative action to address inequalities; such a programme would involve action based on criteria of objective need, not on positive discrimination; a series of measures targeted at those in greatest need would be of special benefit to Catholics.

The key in such a programme would be access to, and opportunity for, employment; it would involve action on the creation of jobs, the location of employment and better equipping people - through

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education and labour market measures - to connect with employment opportunities wherever they exist.

Obviously, resource issues would arise; we would have to explore how far progress could be achieved through existing programmes and through reallocation within the NI Block; we should not at this stage rule out the possibility of seeking an addition to the Block; but all this is for debate within next year's PE Survey, not the current one.

I seek the Secretary of State's agreement to a special interdepartmental effort to develop detailed plans for action.

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