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FROM: B R D WHITE  
DIRECTOR OF REGIMES  
9 MARCH 1993

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*Pl associate with*  
*over paper*  
*f173*

cc: Mr Shannon  
Mr Maccabe-B  
Mr McCusker-B ✓  
Mr Leach-B  
Miss McGowan  
Mr Pope  
Mr Stanley

Mrs Madden

SELF-HELP CENTRES FOR RELEASED LONG TERM AND LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS

Thank you for your minute of 4 March 1993 and its accompanying papers about proposed self-help centres. You asked for comments.

2. I have a number of difficulties with Mrs Gadd's proposal:

- a. I am not happy that the NIO-funded Probation Board should be seen to be making a distinction between so-called "political" prisoners and others. This runs directly counter to what we are trying to do in prisons;
- b. individual centres will be dominated by paramilitary welfare groups who will thus be able to extend their influence at the tax-payer's expense. I note from the supporting papers the suggestion that the families of existing prisoners will be able to use the centres, which will also increase the influence of these organizations. (I assume that once the centres are in being the families of prisoners will not be turned away from the door);

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c. the paper is ambiguous about the management arrangements and I am therefore not clear about the extent to which the scheme will be a joint loyalist/republican venture. Am I right to conclude that the only joint element was the planning which is now concluded?

d. even if it is concluded that the NIO should permit funds to go to self-help schemes because a genuine problem exists, there could be advantages in allowing the problem to surface more publicly before stepping in to help.

3. Finally could I say that I am uncertain about the actual role of Probation in relation to released paramilitary prisoners. There is no supervision of these prisoners and, I presume, no attempt by Probation to encourage them to confront and modify their offending behaviour. I am, therefore, not certain what work Probation should be doing which would not otherwise be done by statutory bodies such as the Health and Social Services Boards, the Social Security Agency and the Training and Employment Agency. If there are genuine social problems being faced by released paramilitaries and their families we might do better to encourage the involvement of other public services which can deal with the released prisoners as individuals, not as members of particular factions.

(signed)

B R D WHITE

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E.R.

FROM: MRS M E MADDEN  
CRIMINAL JUSTICE SERVICES DIVISION  
4 MARCH 1993

ASST./  
SEC

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-5 MAR 1993

C.C.R.U.

MR McCUSKER, CCRU  
MR LEACH, SPOB  
MR MACCABE, PAB  
MR WHITE, PRISONS

Note outgo

**SELF HELP CENTRES FOR RELEASED LONG-TERM AND LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS**

The Probation Board for Northern Ireland has approached this Division with a proposal to set up, initially two, self help centres for released long term and life sentence prisoners. These centres will be managed by a Management Committee reporting to loyalist and republican groups.

2. The basic thrust, as we understand it, is to provide places which released prisoners and their families will use - to obtain helpful information, social facilities etc. Full backing papers are attached.

3. The Chief Probation Officer has already discussed the proposal with (before Christmas) Mr Lyon and, more recently, Mr Ledlie.

4. You will see from the papers that this is a difficult project. We feel the key policy areas are whether we are content to fund a centre which is, in effect, only for "political prisoners"; and whether we are prepared to use Government funds in this way. We suspect this would be very difficult but would appreciate colleagues' views from the different parts of the office.

5. It may be that Liaison will have an input to this proposal, and perhaps Ministers at a later date, but in the meantime I should be grateful for your thoughts on it. It is my intention, once I have gathered a full range of views, to present a considered opinion to DUSB towards the end of the month.

*Mary E Madden*

MARY E MADDEN

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## DRAFT PROPOSAL

### SELF HELP CENTRES FOR RELEASED LONG TERM AND LIFE SENTENCE PRISONERS

#### Background

Northern Ireland has a very high proportion of long term and life sentenced prisoners. Currently there are 332 prisoners serving a life sentence and 763 serving three plus years out of a total of 1148 prisoners in all. The majority of those serving lengthy sentences have a paramilitary background and are committed for scheduled (terrorist) offences. It is very probable that a significant percentage of this population would not have committed the offence were it not for the civil conflict within Northern Ireland.

This paper specifically addresses the problems of life sentence prisoners released into the community although everything in it is also relevant to those serving determinate sentences who are released, indeed with less preparation and support than the lifers.

#### Current Issues

Anyone removed from society for as long a period of time as most of the life sentence prisoners will on release into the community face a range of problems. These problems adjusting to change in themselves in their family and in the community around them are experienced not only by released prisoners but by anyone who has spent a considerable period of time in a total institution e.g. hospital, convent. The problems of the paramilitary prisoners and their families in Northern Ireland however are exacerbated for the following reasons:

The paramilitary organisations and the majority of prisoners themselves do not accept the label of criminal. They are also reluctant to admit that they have problems during their period in prison or on release. Even if they do admit to problems many individuals and families are unprepared to accept help from statutory agencies such as PBNI or Social Services or even from voluntary organisations such as NIACRO. Further, although PBNI has good working relationships with the paramilitary welfare organisations, and indeed are providing a range of services which are used by prisoners and released prisoners and their families, it is nevertheless difficult for the welfare organisations to publicly acknowledge this help from an agency which receives its funding from the Northern Ireland Office.



As more prisoners (mostly men) are released back into the community, particularly the growing of lifers during the past few years, the organisations, the families and the individuals themselves are beginning to admit that reintegration into modern society after an absence in some cases of 15/16 years is not easy. Once the euphoria after release wears off it is inevitable that individuals and families will struggle in reintegration back into communities and into finding a legitimate worthwhile and adult role within their own families. It is critical therefore that a range of services be made available **in a way which they will be used** for released prisoners.

#### Proposed Project

Attached at appendix I is a copy of a proposal presented to me by representatives of released republican and loyalist prisoners. They feel that the best way to provide this help is through self help centres run by themselves, but linking closely with the range of statutory, voluntary and community services already available. While I have reservations about the size of the organisation which they are proposing I am fully supportive of the notion that help is best made available to released prisoners and their families through the self help notion as provided in specialist centres.

Following my discussions with the representatives I would propose the following as a possible way forward:

- (i) The scheme will be jointly (that is loyalist and republican) planned, managed, and run centrally.
- (ii) There will be a city centre office for those people who are not inhibited about visiting same. There will also be small "drop-in" centres in a republican and a loyalist area, especially for those released prisoners who initially are fearful and distrustful of other than their own kind.
- (iii) The released prisoners would form themselves into an organisation with a Management Committee comprising of Probation personnel, the voluntary sector if it is willing to be involved, and other responsible people e.g. Business in the Community nominees. This committee would then apply for money to the Probation Board and other funding sources in order to establish the drop-in facility and to staff it on an on going basis.

The drop-in centre would be a co-ordinating and support centre but would not unless there is no other choice set up separate tailor made released prisoners services. To do so would be an unnecessary duplication of service which would further ostracise the released prisoner from the community.



Concerns that may be expressed

1. **Creation of a specialist after-care service for paramilitary prisoners.** This is in effect what we are proposing. Twenty years on into the troubles while Probation and other organisations have made some inroads into providing a service to the released paramilitary prisoner this is far from ideal. This type of prisoner and his family will not seek help from local Probation offices. It is not even a good idea that they should in that our ordinary clientele tend to be hostile towards and frightened of them. There is also growing evidence of released long term prisoners experiencing a range of problems e.g. breakdown of family, unemployment, for which they need help and which it is in everyone's best interests to provide.
2. **Financial support would discriminate in favour of them.** This is not the case a substantial sum of money already is given by Government either to Probation directly or through Probation to Save the Children, Quakers etc. to provide services for ordinary criminals. The nature of our service is to encourage individual groupings to develop self help e.g. prison fellowship, local NIACRO prisoners wives groups etc. We have a drop-in facility in central Belfast. Supporting of this group would be widening the responsibility to take account of individual needs of paramilitary prisoners and their families.
- (iii) **Government funding would release money to be spent on more sinister paramilitary hardware.** This would not be the case, there is no money spent by the paramilitary welfare organisations on the support of released prisoners as it is at the moment. They are left to sink or swim. Government funding of self-help groups would be a new provision not a replacement for one already in existence.
- (iv) **Bringing released prisoners together would increase the risk of re involvement.** There is little evidence so far that released life sentence prisoners are interested in re involvement. Quite the reverse and this proposal is their way of attempting to ensure that vulnerable released prisoners who are struggling to survive in the community are better supported. Additionally they are happy to have detailed oversight by the committee of the work undertaken in the centres and the spending of money.
- (v) **Such centres would be vulnerable to attack from a cross faction.** Currently this proposal has the support of all the paramilitary organisations and the evidence so far is that released prisoners and their families are left alone. There is realistically an increased risk that an identified centre might be more easily targeted.



## Costs

### Location

	<u>per annum</u>
Shankill Road - premises to purchase and adapt - Capital Grant	£35,000*
Falls Road (probably terraced house Mulholland Terrace to purchase and adapt -	£35,000
Premises to rent on a yearly basis -	
Shankill Road	£10,000
Falls Road	£10,000

### Salaries

2 Development Officers  
1 Admin. Officer

(max.) £32,000  
£12,000

Telephone, heat, lighting etc.  
8,000

Services such as family counselling, benefits advice, employment placements, job training, accommodation, leisure pursuits etc. would be provided out of existing resources, at little extra cost servicing the drop-in centres as by arrangement with the Development Officers.

BREIDGE GADD  
CHIEF PROBATION OFFICER



## PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR FORMER PRISONERS AND THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

The aim of this project is to help ex-prisoners to re-enter their own communities with opportunities equal to established members and to create a programme of self help. It is our belief that self help is the most realistic way forward for political prisoners and their families.

### INTRODUCTION

#### THE CONCEPT OF SELF-HELP:

In April 1991 a meeting was convened at Quaker House to discuss the welfare situation of factionalised life sentence political prisoners on their immediate and long term needs when they are granted their freedom.

Those present included:

- a) Former members of loyalist and republican organisations who had themselves been incarcerated for life sentences, thus experiencing the transition from political prisoner to citizen;
- b) Two people involved with Quaker prison work with a vast amount of prison experience, having been involved with incarcerated prisoners' welfare, the families of prisoners, prison officials - at both the prisons and the appropriate government department -, and with other statutory and voluntary agencies concerned with prison welfare.
- c) The meeting was chaired by an independent researcher with an interest in problems facing ex-prisoners.

The outcome was a unanimous decision to meet on a regular basis (upwards of twenty such meetings have taken place from that time) to identify those difficulties that undoubtedly exist and to discuss ways and means which would alleviate those problems identified.

What follows is the result of many hours of discussion and debate by all those in attendance.

£100,000 per year (excluding staffing costs) and a working committee would be established to administer these funds. Because of the large amount of money involved, an advisory group would be made up from an equal number of the working committee and members of the official/state bodies tasked with prisoners' relatives welfare, i.e. Probation, SIACSO et al. In this way the administration of funds could be scrutinized without interfering with the integrity of the working committee and/or the centre itself.

One further point which will arise is the use of any such centre; that is, which section of prisoners will avail of the facilities? As already mentioned the group of prisoners who suffer most from the lack of care facilities are political prisoners and as such the centre would be for political prisoners alone. The reason for this is that to attempt to organize such a centre is any



BACKGROUND:

With the beginning of the release of lifers an inadequacy in the 'post release' welfare provisions has become glaringly obvious. Such an inadequacy has always existed, but to an extent it has been disguised in the cases of sentenced prisoners who receive a grant upon release. In the case of lifers no such provision exists. Because lifers have no immediate resources to live on and with which to face the practical problems all prisoners encounter, the emotional and societal problems which face every prisoner upon release become all the more apparent.

Some facilities are on offer from organisations such as the Probation Service and NIACRO. By and large they are not utilized, due mostly to the fact that the bulk of prisoners coming out are political prisoners and a vast gulf in terms of trust exists between political prisoners and such organisations. In short, although in theory a welfare provision exists, in practice it is not utilized and as such is non-existent.

This situation is exacerbated when one considers the lack of welfare provision for the families of serving prisoners. Apart from the every day practicalities of having to live without a partner and to raise a family, most families need the opportunity to sit down with others in a similar situation and share experiences, learn from each other, or just to let off steam. As in the above case, the families do not trust the existing welfare agencies, perhaps because the prisoners' mistrust has been transferred to the families.

The result of this is that the welfare needs of neither prisoners' families nor former prisoners are properly addressed.

We would base our arguments for drop in centres on personal experience. It is recognized that there are bodies already tasked with providing some of the services that we have outlined below. However, without the full co-operation of ex-prisoners, service provision is not fully effective, and we would argue that our proposals would not be in competition with these agencies, but in fact would form a partnership to ensure the optimum services for the released prisoners.

(telephone systems, word processors, desks, chairs, filing cabinets, photocopier, fax machine, etc.)



## PROPOSAL FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF SERVICES AND FACILITIES FOR FORMER PRISONERS AND THE FAMILIES OF PRISONERS

The aim of this project is to help ex-prisoners to re-enter their own communities with opportunities equal to established members and to create a programme of self help. It is our belief that self help is the most realistic way forward for political prisoners and their families.

### THE CONCEPT OF SELF-HELP:

Recently the concept of individuals and communities organizing themselves to help to resolve the problems facing them has gained acceptance among the social services. Basically the concept believes that the people on the ground facing the problems are best informed and equipped to handle them, thus it should be the role of official/state bodies to aid people to take on their own problems and not attempt to take on their problems in a patronizing fashion. Nowhere is this concept more applicable than in the cases of political prisoners in the North of Ireland: (1) because they are used to taking on their own problems and attempting to organize their own lives, and (2) because they do not have trust in the official/state bodies. Therefore, in the cases of political prisoners and their families the concept of self-help is the only realistic way to proceed.

So how can the concept of self-help be applied in this case? We feel that what is needed as a starting point is:

a centre and/or focal point with which prisoners' families and former prisoners can identify and use as a meeting point. Such a centre should have provision for meetings, child minding facilities, limited accommodation space, some provision for vocational/craft training and a basic advice centre. The centre would not only have to be staffed by former prisoners and the relatives of serving prisoners, but its working committee must be made up from the same body of people.

Provisionally the establishment of such a centre would need to be financed to the sum of approx. £100,000 per year (excluding staffing costs) and a working committee would be established to administer these funds. Because of the large amount of money involved, an advisory group would be made up from an equal number of the working committee and members of the official/state bodies tasked with prisoners' relatives welfare, i.e. Probation, NIACRO et al. In this way the administration of funds could be scrutinized without interfering with the integrity of the working committee and/or the centre itself.

One further point which will arise is the use of any such centre; that is, which section of prisoners will avail of the facilities? As already mentioned the group of prisoners who suffer most from the lack of care facilities are political prisoners and as such the centre would be for political prisoners alone. The reason for this is that to attempt to organize such a centre in any



other way would lead to a repeat of the present situation, i.e. services not being utilized.

Because of the demography of the North of Ireland and its political history, there have to be twin centres; one to cater for Republican prisoners and the other to cater for Loyalist prisoners.

The centres would be staffed for the most part by ex-prisoners and their families, but, where necessary, expertise would be brought in from professional bodies. The staff and equipment for each centre is outlined below.

STAFF REQUIREMENTS:

- 2 development workers;
  - 1 local and 1 regional, to cater for rural areas.
- 2 administration workers
- 1 secretary

Both administrators will be required to perform general office duties, the management, scheduling, telephonist, financial administration etc.

Development workers would specialize in benefits and training - ie, skilled business management training, further education, community education, job search. They would be expected to adopt a familiarisation programme with the business community and to encourage personal development.

The centres would also deal with the ex-prisoners' problems in relation to family, partners, employers, and their community. Existing pressures on these relationships would be examined and methods to surmount unforeseen problems would be explored.

#### PHYSICAL REQUIREMENTS:

Building of offices, possibly close to industrial development units.

One office consisting of administration area, one office for each development worker, a training room/multi-purpose conference room, creche facilities, training equipment, (ie. overhead and slide projectors for audio visual aids etc), office equipment (telephone systems, word processors, desks, chairs, filing cabinets, photocopier, fax machine, etc).



CONCLUSION:

In considering the above there are two points which are essential and have to be accepted: (1) that there is a need for a facility to cater for the needs of former political prisoners and the families of serving political prisoners, (2) that this need cannot be catered for by anyone but the people themselves, i.e. based on the concept of self-help. Once these two points are accepted, the ways and means of best implementing them are then open to discussion. The above is but one proposal which serves as a means of highlighting the difficulties; it is not a definitive paper. This being the case, we would welcome other ideas and suggestions as well as criticisms of this paper.