

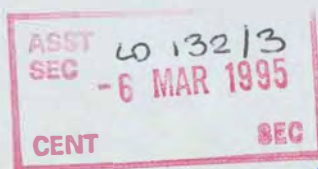
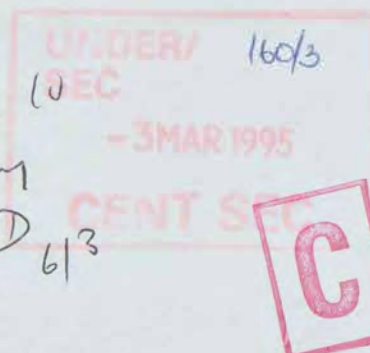
185/95.

Mrs McKibbin

*pl fell
I passed fell
you this many*

D 6/3

From: J A DANIELL
AUS (CRIMINAL JUSTICE)
3 March 1995



Mrs Kenney

*Mr Dulis LD 6/3
They're taking on
change (1/). Thank
you.*

J.J

cc PS/S of S (B&L)
PS/Mr Ancram (B&L)
PS/PUS (B&L)
PS/Mr Fell
Mr Legge
Mr Thomas
Mr Shannon
Mr Blackwell
Mr Steele
Mr Leach
Mr Watkins
Mr Bell
Mr Williams
Mr Cornick
Mrs Madden
Mr White
Mr Maccabe
Mr Stephens
Mr Bramley
Mr Buchanan

PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L)

REINTEGRATION OF EX PARAMILITARY PRISONERS

Attached is a paper which presents the outcome of a review of policy towards projects designed to assist in the reintegration of ex prisoners in the community. This minute sets out the background against which the paper was written and invites Ministers to endorse the strategy set out in para 29 of the paper - which represents an extension of current policy rather than any significant new departure.

Background

2. Preparing prisoners for release into the community is a longstanding objective of the Prison Service; while the Probation Service and voluntary agencies, such as NIACRO and EXTERN, have a significant role to play post release. Criminal Justice Services Division is involved in this through its role in providing Grant Aid for the Probation Board and the

R E S T R I C T E D P O L I C Y

voluntaries; and it considers the merits of specific projects where they are novel and contentious.

3. The immediate cause of our decision to review policy in this area was a debate within the Office, and outside, about whether, given the ceasefire and exploratory dialogue, a more forward approach to reintegration on issues might be justified. Indeed there is the potential to make a small contribution to oiling the wheels of dialogue, without giving away any significant bargaining chips. But also, leaving aside the peace process, this is an area worthy of attention in its own right. As the paper makes clear, there is currently no over-arching strategy on reintegration as such, although there is co-operation and co-ordination between the agencies. In terms of sensible policy development, it makes sense to address this issue from a strategic perspective.

4. So far as ex paramilitary prisoners are concerned, those who retain their allegiances tend not to avail themselves of the services of statutory bodies or the main voluntary agencies. They prefer to rely upon their own front organisations. Moreover the existence of the Hurd policy, the need to ensure financial and management soundness and a desire to avoid supporting schemes intended for the exclusive use of ex paramilitaries have combined to keep government funding away from projects which they might see as addressing their needs. The attached paper opens up a process which, at a rate to be determined by Ministers, might gradually reduce the distance between our reintegration policy and the aspirations of the paramilitaries. At the same time, it opens up the prospect of a more strategic approach for the generality of prisoners.

The Paper

5. The paper:

sets out the programmes and schemes currently available;
(paras 4 to 14;

R E S T R I C T E D P O L I C Y

R E S T R I C T E D P O L I C Y

describes the pressures for change (paras 15 to 22);

charts the way ahead, including action already in hand (paras 23 to 28); and

summarises the recommended approach (para 29s and 30).

6. In short, the conclusions note that research has already been commissioned on the reintegration needs of ex long-term prisoners and that agencies are being actively encouraged to take advantage of the European peace package to secure funds for schemes in this area. The concluding paragraphs also lay out options for achieving a more proactive approach in the future. This might include broadening our range of contacts on these issues, convening a multi-agency seminar on the needs of ex-prisoners, a more forward policy in the consideration of applications for funding and, at the right time, broaching the subject in a positive way in (L)XD.

7. As the paper points out (para 27), there may come a point when some calculated risk taking may be necessary if we are to develop a challenging and imaginative profile on reintegration matters.

8. The paper also draws attention to the importance of balancing a more forward approach on ex-prisoners with recognition of the interests of victims. We would seek to do this in conjunction with Victim Support, whose Chief Executive is particularly concerned that the interests of those who have suffered from the troubles should not be forgotten in the post ceasefire situation. However, at this stage, I agree with Mrs Madden (her advice on Minister's Case JMO/56/95) that we should not contemplate increasing their baseline funding; we are encouraging them to adopt a more active approach to fundraising on their own account.

R E S T R I C T E D P O L I C Y

Conclusion

9. The Minister is invited to endorse the strategy set out in paragraph 29 of the attached paper, subject to the caveats in paragraph 30. We stand ready to discuss if that would be helpful.

(SGD)

J A DANIELL

MH 27500

14342

REINTEGRATION OF EX PARAMILITARY PRISONERS

This paper presents the outcome of a review of policy towards projects designed to assist in the reintegration of ex prisoners in the community. It has been prepared following wide consultation within the NIO and with Central Secretariat and DHSS; and it takes account of the fact that the Hurd policy is currently under consideration.

2. If reintegration is to be addressed comprehensively, a range of issues have to be taken into account including employment prospects, training, social and psychological adjustment and housing. Employment is particularly important given its implications for self esteem, and research suggests that it has a significant impact on recidivism.

3. The paper examines:

the current situation
pressures for a more proactive approach
options for the future

Current policy on reintegration issues - Programmes in Prisons

4. "Serving the Community", the Prison Service Strategy document for the nineties, has as one of its objectives "to enable all prisoners to retain links with their families and to assist sentenced prisoners in their preparation for release into the community". This is supported by commitments:- to integrate the work of occupational services, education and vocational training, thus enhancing the prospects for employment after release; and to continue liaising with other agencies and voluntary groups to facilitate the return of prisoners to the community.

5. Within the prisons there are a range of programmes in place to support these objectives. These include nine workshops in Maghaberry Prison, a wide range of educational programmes in all prison establishments with an uptake of over 50%, home leave schemes to enable prisoners to strengthen links with families and the pre-release programme for prisoners serving life sentences. There is the low security unit at Magilligan (Foyleview) for prisoners engaged in work in the community; and there are plans to open a further resettlement unit in Maghaberry to offer a programme to prepare long-term prisoners for release. The introduction of sentence planning, by addressing the needs of individual prisoners, will also facilitate the development of meaningful activities which assist in the preparation for release.

6. The Probation Service, as a provider of welfare services in prisons, also plays a part in support of the Prison Service strategy by, amongst other things, enabling prisoners to participate in a personal development programme which helps them prepare for resettlement.

Programmes in the Community

7. The remainder of this paper, however, concentrates on programmes in the community to assist ex-prisoners after release to achieve successful reintegration. It is on this area that there is likely to be most focus in the coming months and where there will be pressure for increased provision. However it should be emphasised that the concept of throughcare is important; ideally, there should be an overall strategy, involving the relevant statutory and voluntary agencies aimed at ensuring that pre and post release arrangements complement each other and provide the opportunity for a continuum.

8. Currently there is no discrete criminal justice policy or strategy on reintegration, applicable after release. The terms "reintegration", 'rehabilitation' and 'resettlement' appear neither in the consultative document "Crime in the Community" nor in the subsequent publication 'Criminal Justice Policy Proposals'. Rather, the subject is addressed as an element of the Department's Crime Prevention strategy. By providing substantial levels of core funding and maintaining close liaison with PBNI, NIACRO and Extern, the Department ensures that the whole range of crime prevention issues, including reintegration, is addressed through the programmes of those bodies.

9. The Probation Board directly operates two community based schemes of particular relevance to ex-prisoners and reintegration. Its Employment Unit helps ex-offenders prepare for and secure gainful employment - through direct assistance with securing training placements etc, identifying and educating potential employers and policy development with the Prison Service. However, while the Unit has built up considerable expertise, it has had only a very modest level of success in securing job placements. The Probation Board also runs the Prison Link project in partnership with NIACRO to co-ordinate and develop a range of practical and counselling services for prisoners' families, prisoners and ex-prisoners. It involves ex-offenders in providing information, transport, childcare and other facilities.

10. Through its Community Development Budget of £1.9m per annum the Probation Board grant aids some 85 community organisations, including a number concerned with assisting ex-offenders. The grants are made without reference to the department, unless novel and contentious in character; the Board can also seek funds for specific community based projects from other sources such as Making Belfast Work.

11. NIACRO has a number of schemes directed towards reintegration including eleven workshops (funded jointly with the Probation Board and T & EA), a Training and Placement Unit delivering core training programmes with nationally recognised qualifications and New Opportunities for Women, a European funded training programme for wives of offenders and female ex-offenders. NIACRO has also compiled a Code of Practice, giving advice to employers on the employment of ex-offenders; this is to be launched shortly with NIO and DED Ministerial support.

12. One scheme is of particular interest in the context of ex paramilitary prisoners:- the Community Self Build Development Programme, organised jointly by NIACRO and the Open Door Housing Association. It aims to bring the self build housing concept to high unemployment, low income communities, and in its initial phase has targeted ex-lifers. The scheme has not yet been taken up by the loyalists but republicans have registered the first project as the Belfast Self Build Housing Association. It would appear to have considerable potential in terms of equipping ex-prisoners with practical skills on projects which provide tangible benefits (houses) for them. Hurd policy considerations delayed the development of this project for almost a year, but on 22 December the Secretary of State indicated his agreement that the Hurd policy should not apply thus enabling NIACRO to start taking the project forward.

13. Extern provides accommodation for ex-offenders at two hostels and through its Restyle Workshop it provides training and employment opportunities for 43. In conjunction with Probation and NIACRO it runs Jobtrain, a managing agency for the delivery of a job training programme under the auspices of T & EA. This is aimed at ex-offenders and offers 12 weeks foundation training and 40 weeks work placement, as well as educational and enterprise courses. Jobtrain's contract is for 80 places.

14. The paramilitary organisations, directly and through fronts, have also of course provided support mechanisms for prisoners and their families, before and after release.

Limitations of the current post release arrangements for reintegration

15. Several agencies, statutory and voluntary, are actively involved in providing a range of community based services to assist in the reintegration of prisoners. There is considerable expertise in this area. But all concerned would recognise that there are limitations on what the current arrangements are achieving, especially in relation to ex paramilitary prisoners. In particular:-

- (i) the lack of strategic approach means that the needs are not identified and prioritised with a view to their being met in a co-ordinated way by the agencies;
- (ii) the employment schemes do not on the whole result in a high rate of placement in permanent employment;
- (iii) there is a reluctance on the part of ex paramilitary prisoners to take advantage of schemes run by PBNI and the main voluntary agencies such as NIACRO.

16. The difficulty identified at (iii) above was no doubt one of the factors which prompted the Chief Probation Officer to approach the Department in 1993 seeking funding for the provision of two "drop-in centres" (in the Shankill and the Falls) for the exclusive use of released long term prisoners and their families. They would be staffed and managed by ex-prisoners and provide facilities for meetings, child-minding, vocational/craft training etc. The proposal has not been supported because (inter alia) -

- the centres were clearly intended for the exclusive use of ex-paramilitary prisoners;
- they would add credibility and standing to the paramilitary organisations;
- there were already facilities in place which the paramilitaries chose not to use;
- the management arrangements were unclear and did not provide sufficient assurance that public funds would be properly used (there was a related concern deriving from the possibility that such arrangements could well trigger application of the Hurd policy);
- there was a lack of clarity about what the centres were intended to achieve for ex-prisoners and the concept was not consistent with current thinking on such facilities.

17. The proposal has been the subject of protracted correspondence; it now rests with a letter from Mr Legge to the effect that the time is not yet right to consider provision of financial support for the proposal. Despite the changed circumstances brought about by the ceasefire, some of the doubts expressed in para 16 remain valid. It has been suggested, both by officials and others outside the Department, that, far from facilitating reintegration, the proposed centres would constitute nothing more than extensions to the paramilitary wings in the Maze.

Pressures for change

18. No doubt fuelled by attention paid to the 'prisoners' issue in the context of the ceasefires, there have been growing pressures for action on reintegration. For example:-

- i. in a Belfast Telegraph article last October, John Hume was reported as calling for millions of pounds of EU aid to be spent on retraining terrorists;
- ii. the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust approached PUS in November with plans for two drop-in centres, prepared under the aegis of PROPP (Progressive Release of Political Prisoners) - identical to the Chief Probation Officer's proposal;
- iii. in recent discussions with PAB, the Reverend Roy Magee said that resettlement of former paramilitary prisoners was crucial to the peace process;
- iv. in December an article appeared in the Observer reporting, among others, the Chief Probation Officer and Billy Hutchinson (PUP) criticising the lack of support structures for reintegration;

19. Furthermore the Director of Making Belfast Work, Mr T McCusker, reflecting the views of community organisations, has suggested that the time is right for more radical thinking about questions relating to ex-prisoners and how they might be absorbed back into their communities - he has also reported a view commonly held in working class loyalist and republican areas that those convicted of paramilitary crimes should be treated differently.

20. In submissions put forward at LXD by the UDP and PUP, both parties highlighted the resettlement of prisoners as an issue which was central to the maintenance of the ceasefire. The former asserted the view that the services of NIACRO and the Probation Service were rarely used by loyalist paramilitary prisoners. They claimed that the Loyalist Prisoners Aid and Loyalist Prisoners Welfare Association provided a more acceptable, local and personal response, and sought a comprehensive resettlement programme

with grants to help facilitate reintegration. Gary McMichael has subsequently reinforced his Party's commitment to the rehabilitation of ex-prisoners in several recent television appearances. In their submission the PUP were less explicit, highlighting their disappointment at the lack of constructive responses by HMG on the issue of prisoners.

21. The attitude of the paramilitary organisations and the parties involved in (L)XD may create difficulties. If the paramilitaries were genuinely concerned about reintegration they could do more to stimulate their members to avail themselves of the range of programmes which are available. There are no doubt elements within these groups, who see reintegration simply as a question of how much cash the Government is prepared to give to the Prisoners' welfare organisations. And, in a presentation to the Forum for Peace and Reconciliation, the Sinn Fein spokesman on prison matters denied that reintegration was an issue; according to his thesis republican prisoners would walk back into their communities with heads held high and would have no difficulty in readjusting.

22. Despite the problems it is manifestly in the interests of the community as a whole that the reintegration of ex-paramilitary prisoners is successfully achieved (in the short and long term) with a minimum of disruption. Moreover, despite the pitfalls, this is an area where Government can send positive signals in exploratory dialogue. This will have to be handled sensitively, to ensure that paramilitary prisoners do not appear to be being placed in a **privileged position** - and with due regard to the **sensitivities of victims**. Indeed, it will be important that a more proactive policy in relation to reintegration is accompanied by parallel activity to demonstrate the Government's commitment to the support of those who are the victims of crime in general and terrorism in particular.

The Way Ahead

23. Action is already in hand to develop a more proactive stance in relation to reintegration. The Department has commissioned a research project which will identify the needs of long term prisoners on release and consider the extent to which those needs are currently being met by the agencies - including the Probation Service, NIACRO, Extern, the Housing Executive, the Social Security Agency, and T&EA. The research team would, amongst other things, interview paramilitary prisoners' welfare organisations. The project is due for completion in six months and will assist in the development of a strategic approach to reintegration by helping inform decisions on how existing programmes might be enhanced, redesigned or fine tuned.

24. In the meantime CJSD is liaising closely with the Department of Finance and Personnel to secure funding for its client group - which, of course includes ex-offenders - from the **EU assistance package** agreed at the Essen Council in December and generally known as the **Northern Ireland Peace Package**. That initiative will offer funds for distribution across the Province and in the border counties of the Republic, through a number of programmes, including an **Employment** and a **Social Inclusion Programme** which will embrace our interests in terms of crime prevention and reintegration. CJSD intends to work closely with its voluntary bodies to ensure that applications for funding are coordinated, properly structured and that proposed services, where possible, dovetail with other facilities such as pre-release provision. Ministers have decided that local communities should be involved in the consultation and decision-making processes in relation to this package, thus increasing the scope for pressure for funds to be used for ex-prisoner reintegration measures.

25. In a similar vein, CJSD will continue to sponsor projects put forward by the Probation Board, NIACRO and Extern for MBW funding, but will be more proactive than previously, by working with these bodies on the development of proposals before they are submitted.

26. We are already engaging more actively than before in discussions with the main statutory and voluntary agencies on these issues; this in itself is sending signals about the Government's desire to address the problems surrounding reintegration. There would be advantage when the time is judged right, in **broadening our contacts** in this area to include people, such as the Reverend Magee, who have a keen interest in prisons issues. The extent to which such contacts should be widened would be kept under review in the light of changing circumstances, including developments in (L)XD.

27. It will be necessary to face the issue of the paramilitaries' reluctance to avail themselves of services provided by Government, the Probation Board and the main voluntary agencies. That does not mean giving them the cash and letting them get on with it. If public funds (including European and MBW cash) are to be used to facilitate reintegration projects, publicly accountable agencies must be in a position to satisfy themselves that projects are meeting genuine needs and that money is being properly spent. What might be possible in some cases is to develop arrangements where the **agencies act as facilitators** and have an arms length monitoring capacity, rather than providing services direct themselves (this is an approach favoured by NIACRO). This might prove acceptable to the paramilitaries and would be consistent with the "self help" theme, enabling ex-offenders to take responsibility and a degree of ownership and management of schemes - without giving them the freedom to exploit public funds. Caution would be

needed in developing such concepts; but if progress is to be made in this area, which will be an important part of the strategy of sustaining and embedding the peace, some calculated risk taking is likely to be necessary.

28. There will be resource implications in all of this. European and MBW money may play some part in funding new schemes; and European cash may be particularly attractive for those who would prefer to keep some distance from Government. However, the three year funding horizon, while in some respects quite appropriate in this area, is a limiting factor; and it would be difficult for the Department credibly to move this debate on without having the ability to bring some extra resources to bear.

Conclusion

29. The Minister is recommended to endorse the following strategy designed to demonstrate commitment to addressing the reintegration issue:

- i. the ongoing research into the reintegration needs of ex long-term prisoners - the results of which will inform the joint development of policy in this area;
- ii. active encouragement of agencies to take advantage of the European Peace Package;
- iii. supplement the research with bilateral discussions on this issue with the agencies and a careful broadening of our range of contacts;
- iv. at an appropriate time, convene a meeting/seminar with the agencies, Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust (and others?) to explore the needs of ex-prisoners and how they might best be met - such discussions might include the concept of projects run by ex-prisoners, with, say, NIACRO acting as managing agents;

- v. taking account of any decisions that may be taken in relation to the Hurd policy, demonstrate in our consideration of individual cases a commitment to remove perceived obstacles to the growth of community and ex-offender led initiatives for reintegration and employment - subject to appropriate controls being in place;
- vi. the very fact of taking the above action will have the effect of communicating the existence of a more proactive approach - the message could be also put across in (L)XD, when appropriate. And no doubt the theme could be developed as a constructive area of discussion in (L)XD.
- vii. the further development of a strategy in relation to victims - in conjunction with Victim Support.

30. The timing and presentational implications of any fresh initiatives concerned with reintegration will of course be carefully considered in the light of the developing peace process; and the endorsement of Ministers will be sought for new proposals, including those which might involve extending the range of contacts and/or support for schemes which break new ground.

13767