

RESTRICTED

9249JK, 27/2/87.

P/A. Central Secretariat  
dealing with this -  
paramilitary file. (Sott  
5/3



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C J Stutt Esq  
Policy Division  
Department of Economic Development  
Netherleigh  
Massey Avenue  
Belfast BT4 2JP

Your reference

Our reference

Date 20 February 1987

Dear Colin,

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR SELF-HELP GROUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Some months ago I talked with Bernie O'Hare about Government aid to various self-help groups. My enquiry at the time concerned the cessation of aid to these organisations from LEDU, ACE etc on the grounds that they were, to various degrees, associated with paramilitary organisations.

2 This subject continues to be of interest to the Irish ethnic press here and of course the more hard edged groups such as the Irish-American Unity Conference and Noraid ply it as a regular propaganda issue. Father Des Wilson has been particularly virulent in this country about Conway Mill, the Springhill Centre and Dove House and you will see from the attached papers that he and Mary Nelis, in association with some people here, are now trying to solicit financial support by setting up investment companies based here in the US which include the names of the Northern Ireland organisations in their company titles. I understand that some of the US people listed along with Wilson and Nelis are closely associated with Noraid and certainly the good father makes no attempt to conceal his close contact with that group when in the New York area. This immediately raises some concern that any money raised through these investment companies might not in fact be used to improve the facilities at the various centres listed, but might instead be directed towards other less laudable activities. Perhaps Chris McCabe or John McConnell to whom I am copying this letter will give this some thought.

3 For my part I would be grateful if you could let me have in writing an update on the current position of Government funding for the organisations on the attached list. Particularly I would like to have information on the amounts of funding provided since the projects began; was funding suspended or stopped and if so why; has funding been resumed and if so what conditions or controls have been introduced. Needless to say the more information I can have, either by way

/of ...

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Information Requested on:

Dove House  
Conway Mill  
Conway Women's Self-Help Group  
Top of the Hill Tenants Association  
Shantallow Community Centre  
York Road Community Centre  
Springhill Community Centre  
Skegoneil Environmental Group  
Woodvale Community Enterprises

Also an Irish speaking school (name unknown) in Eaer Belfaer - short strand area?

E. R.

CONFIDENTIAL

94605K 6/4/87.

1. No memo  
2. file

Min Office (O/R)

m. Net

cc: Mr Stutt

Mr McConnell  
Mr Thompson  
Mr Hill (SIL)

Miss J McIvor

PA

to see. J 7/4.

Paramilitary file

### GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR COMMUNITY GROUPS

1. In reply to your letter of 20 February 1987 I attach at Annex A a schedule prepared by DED which sets out the information you have requested. I fully appreciate the difficulties you may have in countering adverse propaganda generated by certain Irish interests in the United States but I must caution against disclosure of any details relating to specific cases. For security reasons, and on legal advice, we have persistently refused to provide details concerning the decisions taken.
2. The Government's policy in relation to the termination or refusal of public funds to Community Groups with paramilitary links was set out in the Parliamentary statement on 27 June 1985 by the then Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Hurd. A copy of the statement is attached.
3. To date decisions have been taken in some 27 cases. Public funding was terminated or refused in 16 of these, and agreed in the remaining 11 (which included 2 reversal decisions). Any case which is considered in the context of the Government's policy statement is examined on its own merits; a change in pertinent circumstances can lead to a review of the decision taken.
4. We are facing determined and ruthless people well skilled at concealing their activities within apparently legal frameworks and outwardly legitimate organisations, but the Government is determined that access to public funds shall be cut off to paramilitary bodies.
5. All decisions have been endorsed by the Secretary of State on the basis of the policy outlined in the Parliamentary statement. The action taken has nothing whatsoever to do with teaching of the Irish language or culture; indeed under the ACE scheme support is being provided to 8 Irish language nursery schools throughout the Province, including 5 in West Belfast.

### LINE TO TAKE

6. If pressed in relation to the termination or refusal of Government voluntary body you may wish to draw on the following -

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- The Government's policy in relation to the leakage of public funds to paramilitary bodies, via community groups, was set out in the Parliamentary statement of 25 June 1985.
- We are facing determined and ruthless people, well skilled at concealing their activities within apparently legal frameworks and outwardly legitimate organisations.
- The Government is determined in its resolve to cut off all such sources of revenue to paramilitary bodies.
- The decisions have nothing whatsoever to do with the teaching of the Irish language or culture. (Some 8 Groups teaching the Irish language are currently being supported).
- Each case is dealt with on its own merits.
- A change in pertinent circumstances can lead to a review of the decision taken.

*[Signature]* 3/4/87.  
Central Secretariat

## GOVERNMENT SUPPORT FOR SELF HELP GROUPS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Project	Start Date	Termination Date	Reason for termination	Total Grant Paid	Remarks
Dove House	14.6.85	21.2.86	S.O.S instructions	£15,954.52	Project reinstated by SOS on 28 July 1986. A further £34,705.73 has been paid to the project since that date.
*Conway Mill	23.1.84	18.1.85	Project generated sufficient revenue to become self financing.	not known	File in storage.
Conway Women's Self Help Group	7.11.84	27.6.85	SOS Instructions	Not known	File in storage.
Top of the Hill Tenants Assoc.	8.12.82	25.11.85	SOS instructions	Not known	File in storage
Shantallow Community Centre	13.2.85	31.1.86	SOS instructions	Not known	File in storage
York Road Community Centre	28.8.85	26.3.86	SOS instructions	£17,257.64	
Springhill Community	7.8.87	-		£120,413.51	Project still in operation.
Skegoniel Shore Road and Seaview Environmental Group.	"	-		NIL	New project proposal rejected on SOS instructions.
Woodvale Community Enterprises	"	"		NIL	New project proposal rejected on SOS instructions.
St Matthew's Tenants Assoc	7.12.84	20.2.87	SOS instructions	£51,106	Part of this project involved an Irish Language Playgroup. When the SOS withdrew ACE funding the playgroup Committee submitted an application to continue the project. This application was rejected by the Department on the SOS instructions.
*Conway Mill:					A LEDU Grant towards the refurbishing of Conway Street Mill was refused to the Conway Street Community Group.



NORTHERN IRELAND  
Information Service

27 June 1985

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION

The Secretary of State, Rt Hon Douglas Hurd MP, today gave the following written parliamentary reply to Mr John M Taylor (Solihull), who had asked what plans Mr Hurd has to ensure that Government financial support for community activities is not used to foster the aims and objectives of paramilitary interests.

Mr Hurd: "It is the Government's policy to encourage voluntary and community-based activity which has the genuine aim of improving social, environmental or economic conditions in areas of need, and various grant-aid schemes exist for such purposes. However I am satisfied, from information available to me, that there are cases in which some community groups, or persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups, have sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a grave risk that to give support to those groups would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly. I do not consider that any such use of government funds would be in the public interest, and in any particular case in which I am satisfied that these conditions prevail no grant will be paid."