



A 148/88

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WEST BELFAST STUDY GROUP

INTRODUCTION

1. This submission sets out the main conclusions and recommendations from the West Belfast Study which I have been leading and seeks the Secretary of State's agreement on how we should now proceed.
2. At a meeting on 15 December 1987 the Secretary of State authorised me to set in hand, as a matter of urgency, a review of the relevance and effectiveness of our policies and institutional arrangements for dealing with the problems of "Catholic West Belfast" in the wider context of plans for the development of the city of Belfast as a whole; the existence of multiple deprivation in other parts of the city as well as in "Catholic West Belfast; prospective developments at Laganside; and emerging industrial problems and the possible need for special measures in East Belfast.
3. This review has been carried out by a group of officials drawn from Northern Ireland Departments, NIO, IDB and LEDU. While no public statement has been made about the review, we have sought to avoid a purely "in-house" look at the situation, insulated from the views of those who are closest to the problems. Members of the study group have maintained close contact with interests in West Belfast and with exploratory work being done in the area by the

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International Fund for Ireland. There has also been discussion with SDLP representatives and through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat:

4. A great deal of information has been collected during the review which will we believe be useful to those who may be charged with moving forward from study to action. We have not sought to produce now a voluminous multi-page report since the principal aspects of the situation are all too well known and can be described briefly, simply and starkly. This submission is therefore less concerned with more sophisticated and detailed diagnosis of the problems than with possible remedies.

DEFINING THE TARGET AREA

5. Our first task was to define what we meant by "Catholic West Belfast". We focused upon the fact that there exists, west of the River Lagan, a more or less unbroken series of wards which exhibit the characteristics of multiple deprivation (and in particular very high rates of unemployment). We decided to include, as well as the classic Catholic West Belfast wards, the adjacent areas of special need of Collin Ward (including Twinbrook) in the south-west and Ardoyne and New Lodge in the North. We also included the Andersonstown and Ladybrook Wards which, though not exhibiting the same high levels of deprivation, are widely perceived to be part of the larger "Catholic West Belfast" entity.
6. This approach produced the central target area for the study which is shown in blue on the map of Belfast attached as Annex I. We also decided that "the wider context" referred to at paragraph 2 above required us to keep in view:-
 - a. the wards of "Protestant West Belfast" which are also within the definition of areas of special need, that is to say Ballygomartin, Court, Shankill, Woodvale, Highfield, North Howard, Duncairn and Crumlin (shown in red on the Annex I map);
 - b. areas of special need in the Belfast Urban Area other than those in

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Catholic and Protestant West Belfast (ie those areas of North Belfast, Newtownabbey and East Belfast shown in green on the Annex I map); and

- c. areas of special need in Northern Ireland at large (shown in blue on the map in Annex II).

- 7. It may help to get the target area into perspective on the basis of the 1981 census of population figures. The orders of magnitude are as follows (in each case the figures shown are for thousands of people):-

Northern Ireland population	1532.2
of whom	509.9 live in Belfast Urban Area
	146.7 in Greater West Belfast
	106.0 in Catholic West Belfast
	40.7 in Protestant West Belfast
	139.7 in the least favoured rural areas

ESSENTIAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TARGET AREA

- 8. Annex III describes the main social and economic characteristics of the target area. While both Protestant and Catholic West Belfast show varying characteristics of multiple deprivation, a central issue is employment in Catholic West Belfast with nearly 13,000 unemployed : this is 10% of the Northern Ireland total. CWB contains 7% of the Northern Ireland population, but only 3% of the Province's jobs are located within its boundaries. The area has around 3,000 manufacturing jobs. Employment is heavily concentrated in service industries; over 56% of jobs in the area are occupied by women; and about 23% of jobs are part-time. Available information about travel to work patterns illustrates the enormous importance, actual and potential, of the Belfast City Centre as a place for employment of Catholic West Belfast residents.

POLITICAL AND SECURITY CONSIDERATIONS

- 9. There are other areas of Northern Ireland which share all or most of the acute

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social and economic problems in Catholic West Belfast. What makes the area unique is the scale and concentration of these problems and their very close association with grave political and security difficulties; the strength of PIRA/Sinn Fein and, their influence over many facets of life in the area; the alienation of a large section of the population from the institutions of government (and indeed in some respects from normal civilised behaviour); the ghetto mentality and the widespread sense of hopelessness; the lack of faith in Government's interest or concern for their problems; the reality that a very large number of families in the area have been directly affected by the violence (including having one or more members in prison). Even the most moderate and responsible members of the West Belfast community tend to believe that Government neglects the area and they will point to the contrast with the millions of pounds being spent on maintaining employment in Protestant East Belfast.

10. In seeking to identify more benign influences with whom constructive dialogue can take place and through whom practical progress might be made, we can identify -
- a. the Roman Catholic Church - Bishop Daly and several of his priests have been heavily involved in seeking constructive solutions;
 - b. the SDLP - though it is poorly organised in the area and has lacked a coherent approach to social and economic issues;
 - c. local community groups and enterprises like the newly emerged West Belfast Enterprise Board - see Annex IV - which are not under paramilitary influence.

There is overall a striking absence of the kind of business and wider community leadership which a substantial professional and managerial class might offer. The early success of the first 2 Belfast Action Teams in the New Lodge/Duncairn and Lower Falls/Lower Shankill confirm the need for local leadership and initiative.

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THE WAY FORWARD: AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

11. The basic aim must be the daunting one of "turning West Belfast round" ie to undermine the ghetto mentality, to reduce the alienation, to upgrade the environment, to give the people of the area hope and confidence and to undercut the influence of PIRA. This will involve giving West Belfast people the skills and attitudes to work which will equip them to compete for employment (especially in the City Centre), promoting the enterprise culture in the area, and creating the conditions in which the private sector can contribute to solution of the area's problems.

12. We are, however, starting from a very low base - a very poor environment, the strength of paramilitary influences, and a largely unskilled and, in many cases, unemployable workforce with weak local leadership. The problems in Catholic West Belfast will have to be solved in quite large measure by initiatives outside the immediate area; people in the area will have to be stiffened and reinforced by leadership, advice and expertise from outside. If the long-term aim is to create conditions in which the private sector takes the main weight of leadership, a great deal of preparatory work will have to be stimulated and led by the public sector. We fear that until such work is done the relatively weak private sector in Northern Ireland is unlikely to be able or willing to play as substantial a role in the CWB environment as it is doing in some urban regeneration areas of Great Britain.

13. We suggest that Government's main policy objectives should be:-
 - a. to help to create the conditions in which economic activity in West Belfast can be stimulated and reinforced (as far as possible through private sector activity and growth);

 - b. to enhance the quality of life in the area (both through measures for the benefit of the whole community and, as necessary, support for individuals who need direct help) and

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- c. to improve the prospects for those who live in West Belfast of securing employment and of benefitting from economic and industrial development in the Belfast Urban Area and outside the Area.
14. We considered whether there should be a further objective - to finance any further action by the public sector through further adjustments of programmes within the existing Northern Ireland public expenditure block. To the extent that existing programmes concentrate on the areas of greatest needs, West Belfast already enjoys a very high priority. It may be possible to squeeze modest extra sums from the block for new activity in West Belfast, but this could only be done at the expense of other areas of need in Northern Ireland or of damage to existing programmes which benefit West Belfast. We concluded that further significant measures in West Belfast depend upon the availability of extra resources for Northern Ireland.

THE WAY FORWARD: AN ACTION PROGRAMME

15. We considered the concept - supported by Bishop Daly and others - of a "comprehensive, integrated development plan" for West Belfast. Producing such a plan would be a lengthy exercise, would create expectations which would be very difficult to fulfil and could result in unrealistic proposals and unattainable targets being tabled to the embarrassment of Government. What we must avoid is any further deterioration in the situation or any discouragement of the constructive forces now beginning to rally. It is crucial here that Mackie's not be allowed to collapse and that the response to proposals made by the West Belfast Enterprise Board should be rapid, sympathetic and constructive.
16. Our strong preference is to concentrate on developing as quickly as possible an action programme which would target the main issues on which further significant and measurable progress must be made. The programme would involve an intensification and acceleration of a number of existing activities plus a number of important new measures.

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17. Further detailed work has to be carried out on several points, but the main components of a West Belfast Action Programme would be:-

17.1 Action on Employment

- a. IDB should continue to make all possible efforts to attract to NI investment which will increase job opportunities for the people of West Belfast; though it has to be recognised that such investment may not lead to physical location in West Belfast. Local organisations, such as the West Belfast Enterprise Board, are likely to wish to get involved in complementing such efforts by (for example) seeking to draw upon the sympathy of Irish-Americans. As the John Hume/Boston initiative has shown, initiatives of this kind can involve IDB in substantial extra work, sometimes to limited practical effect. But the system must not be seen to be unsympathetic to efforts by local communities to help themselves and to marshal their own contacts and influence. IDB are, and will remain, in close contact with all their client companies which offer employment to substantial numbers of people from the area, to reinforce stability, stave off decline and (wherever opportunity presents itself) to promote expansion. As in the Mackie case, the social consequences of any loss of the slender job opportunities available to residents of the area must be given substantial weight;
- b. LEDU should be recognised as a key agency in the development of new business activity in West Belfast. Papers indicating some preliminary thinking have already been tabled with the LEDU Board. They centre on such ideas as working with Local Enterprise Companies to increase significantly the number of new business starts; arranging to improve the provision of pre and post-start-up business training; identifying existing resident businesses and working with them to find other profitable business opportunities which will generate employment; exploring the

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possibility of setting up a Business Development Centre where individuals can try out their ideas; identifying voluntary and community groups in the area which are reputable and well-organised, and exploring with them the possibility of their setting up business ventures which would be self-sufficient, allowing individuals to gain business experience; experimenting with ideas to develop technologically-based businesses; and identifying skills of residents working outside the area with a view to encouraging some of them to become self-employed, ideally within the area. It may be necessary, in looking at job opportunities in very deprived areas to relax existing LEDU requirements on "job displacement". Development of these ideas could involve capital costs of £10 millions over 3 years.

- c. Government should continue to encourage the development of the 'enterprise culture' in West Belfast and provide special support to local enterprise bodies to enable them to increase their capacity to be centres for economic development within their areas. In the latter connection Government has already signified, through the Department of Economic Development, its support in principle for the work of the West Belfast Enterprise Board which is comprised of people who are already involved with local enterprise programmes in the area with Youth and Community Workshops, ACE and other community help schemes and who are concerned with redressing the problems of West Belfast particularly its high unemployment. The Board has sought financial assistance from DED and the International Fund towards the cost of identifying and developing projects likely to create viable employment. DED has asked LEDU as its agent to evaluate the Board's proposals so that decisions can be made quickly on what financial assistance should be made available. It has also asked LEDU to consider meanwhile what interim assistance should be provided to the Board to enable it to have the staffing resources that are

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necessary to make progress in the short-term. LEDU could also help to identify individuals who may already be active in existing community groups and who have demonstrated leadership and latent business potential; they would then explore how such individuals might become more directly involved in economic development, either within their existing group or through becoming a member of a Local Enterprise Company. Proposals arising out of the Pathfinder programme for encouraging community business enterprise should be further developed.

- d. Ministers should in parallel with similar measures in GB, approach carefully selected private sector firms to enlist their specific support in tackling the problems of West Belfast.
- e. Government and statutory agencies such as the Eastern Health Board should consider very carefully all proposals which could reduce the number of existing public and private sector jobs in West Belfast.
- f. Extra resources should be provided to create 500 additional jobs in West Belfast through ACE, with priority being given to self-help community initiatives which may lead to permanent jobs and which improve the local environment and enhance the quality of services to the local community.
- g. Government should explore the possibility of a pilot scheme which would provide additional financial incentives to encourage private sector activity in West Belfast.

17.2 Action on the Labour Market and Training

- a. In order to increase the access of residents in the area to employment opportunities, DED should establish a Jobmarket in Catholic West Belfast and another in Protestant West Belfast,

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provided that suitable accommodation can be made available. This would be part of a general policy to decentralise Jobmarkets for Belfast (which are now based in Gloucester House) as soon as the necessary cover for running costs can be secured. (Once Jobmarkets are established in West Belfast there will be strong demands for similar facilities in other areas - for example Newtownabbey, East, and possibly South Belfast).

- b. A Jobclub was established in Lower Falls at the beginning of March this year and one will be created in the Lower Shankill in April, in co-operation with voluntary and community organisations. Additional Jobclubs should be brought into being in West Belfast depending on the success of these initiatives and demand.
- c. DED should ensure that all Jobmarkets and Jobclubs in West Belfast (and other areas when established) have the full support of its Employment Service and access to the information in its possession about employment opportunities, whether in West Belfast or elsewhere. Such access will be enhanced through the computerisation of the Service which will link all Jobmarkets to a common information base, during 1988/89.
- d. Special efforts should be made by DED to secure, through EEC, MSC and other contacts, information about job opportunities in Great Britain and Europe which will be made available through the Jobmarket network.
- e. Information about opportunities to secure training necessary to acquire employment, should be made available through the proposed West Belfast Jobmarkets. Meanwhile information about training opportunities should be disseminated through the Community Workshop network, and from the Department's

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Training Centre at Boucher Road, working with, wherever possible, organisations associated with the community, including the West Belfast Enterprise Board.

- f. DED should support training measures which are necessary to underpin new enterprises. It should also support measures for "outreach training" to enable people in West Belfast to secure the skills they need to obtain employment that is available in Northern Ireland and elsewhere. The first such measure will be a scheme operated in co-operation with the Distributive Industry Training Board aimed at enhancing opportunities to secure jobs in the Retail Sector and in new retail enterprises as they develop in, for example, the Castle Court, Gallaher's and Sprucefield complexes.
- g. Substantial resources already exist or are proposed to provide such training. These include the Training Centre at Boucher Road, the 9 Youth and Community Workshops in the area, the Attachment Training Scheme, the Job Training Programme, the proposed New Adult Training Scheme (reference DED's submission to the Secretary of State of 18 March) and Open Learning. Additional provision should be considered if this proves necessary.
- h. PPRU are initiating an exercise to identify the skills of the economically active age group in West Belfast. A first stage in this would be to survey information collected from a sample of unemployed claimants registering at social security offices in the area. This analysis would include information on the training undertaken and the employment and unemployment history of claimants interviewed. This analysis which should assist in identifying the human resources currently available in West Belfast should be complete within 6 weeks.

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17.3 Action on Education

- a. **Improving Schools:** DENI should, in conjunction with the Belfast Education and Library Board and other school authorities, seek to achieve a substantial improvement in performance of all school children in the area. The relatively poor academic achievements of West Belfast schools must be set against the socio-economic circumstances of the area and this cannot be overcome by the schools alone. It should also be noted that while overall standards are relatively poor, a number of individual schools in the area achieve very good academic standards. To bring all schools in the area up to the standard of the better ones would involve action on the following lines (which may need to be supplemented by some special action to retrieve and rehabilitate as far as possible individual children who have already fallen far behind).
- b. **Curriculum Initiatives:** There have been a number of curriculum initiatives in both primary and secondary schools which have now largely been merged in the 11-16 programme for secondary schools and the primary guidelines for primary schools. Both of these programmes are designed to support schools in reviewing what they are providing in the classroom and considering how this provision can be made more relevant and meaningful to the real needs of young people. It would be possible to use these programmes to focus curricular improvements in West Belfast schools - and particularly to reduce the number of young people leaving West Belfast schools with no qualifications. The proposed introduction of national curriculum will ensure that all pupils are taught core subjects, including technology and science. In addition, the pressures of attainment testing relating to national curriculum will make parents, teachers, schools and local authorities much more aware of how pupils are performing and this will in turn be a major impetus to improving standards.

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- c. **Structure:** Falling school rolls have presented particular problems for West Belfast schools over the past few years. These trends mean that there is now a considerable surplus of school places in the area. This is resulting in wasteful use of resources and, even more significantly, has resulted in a lowering of morale of teachers in the schools where numbers have fallen most rapidly - some schools have been losing 4/5 teachers per year. The reduction in teacher numbers has also meant that it has become increasingly difficult to sustain a broad and balanced curriculum in a number of schools. A major element of improving standards in West Belfast schools must, therefore, be a major reorganisation of secondary schools in the area. This would involve the following:
- i. the first stage of the restructuring process is already under way with the proposal for the new Corpus Christie College in the Lower Falls area. This College will be an amalgamation of 4 existing small boys' maintained secondary schools;
 - ii. discussions are currently under way with the school authorities to effect a similar re-structuring programme in the Upper Falls area - involving De La Salle, St Genevieve's, Cross and Passion, Christian Brothers' Maintained Secondary Schools and Christian Brothers' Grammar School;
 - iii. on the controlled side, plans have already been approved for the closure of Kelvin Secondary School and the relocation of the pupils in other neighbouring secondary schools. Following this it will be necessary to examine the position of Cairnmartin Secondary School and Forthbridge Secondary School.

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If these re-structuring plans can be brought to fruition it will mean that West Belfast would be served by a number of reasonably sized secondary schools which would be able to offer a broad and balanced curriculum and should lead to greater stability in terms of the teaching force. Additional funds would, however, be required if the programme is to be implemented speedily.

- d. **Management:** One particular concern about maintained schools is that they are managed at the level of each individual school. This has meant that the poor schools have tended to lack the structure and support to effect improvements. Also, there is evidence that the present system can result in a weak top management structure within individual schools. The establishment of the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools should help to give all schools better support and, in particular, should help to ensure improvements when it comes to selecting the top tier of teaching posts in the school.
- e. **Morale:** There is a serious problem of low morale amongst teachers and pupils in low achieving schools serving both Catholics and Protestants in West Belfast - a manifestation of which is the very high proportion of pupils leaving those schools without recognised qualifications. Morale problems do not always lend themselves to easy solutions. For both teachers and pupils, the scene would be radically and positively transformed were there to be real jobs and worthwhile employment opportunities. There would then be some point in working towards required targets. Since this remedy is not at present available to the education sector, other avenues need to be considered. The answer does not lie in increasing the allocation of classroom teachers to the schools or even in giving enhanced financial rewards to the teachers. A restoration of purpose may be possible by the following means. First, giving the teachers experience

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outside their own schools by arranging that they work in schools elsewhere in the UK where similar problems have been successfully dealt with and by arranging sabbatical experience to allow them to consider new strategies. Second, by setting up an intensive working group made up of heads and senior staff from West Belfast assisted by the Inspectorate, and charged with producing proposals and recommendations for change. The working group would need to be assured that resources (up to a predetermined limit) would be made available to implement agreed recommendations. Third, by ensuring that schools in West Belfast are given particular priority in the allocation of teaching and learning materials. And fourth, by providing those primary schools which are contributory to the under achieving secondary schools with the support of an advisory teacher to develop strategies for assisting with literacy and numeracy.

- f. **Nursery Education:** Given the relative lack of parental involvement, and the relatively poor performance of some primary schools, there are strong arguments in favour of getting children in the area into the school system at as early an age as possible through nursery provision. Present financial pressures on the education system has meant that there is relatively little nursery provision in West Belfast and more significantly there are no plans to improve the position. A drive to provide more nursery places in the area would, therefore, be a significant element in any overall improvement plan for the education sector. Additional funds will be required to implement any such programme.

- g. **Further Education:** DENI should, in conjunction with the Belfast Board, continue its efforts to increase access to West Belfast people to further education. There are 3 large, well-established, non-denominational further education colleges in the city centre

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of Belfast - the Belfast College of Technology, the Belfast College of Business Studies and Rupert Stanley College. These provide a wide range of further education courses at all levels for all the young people in Belfast - including West Belfast. Rupert Stanley College also operates a number of out centres - including many in West Belfast.

- h. It is, however, accepted that it would be useful to have better co-ordinated, more firmly focussed FE provision within the West Belfast area. An opportunity to achieve this has now arisen with the amalgamation of the 4 boys' secondary schools in the Lower Falls area. One of these schools - St Thomas' - is no longer required for secondary use and the Church authorities have agreed with the Belfast Board that the school should be used to provide a base for further education activities in the area. The Church authorities are currently transferring the greater part of these premises to the Belfast Education and Library Board and the Board is committed to developing this centre as soon as the secondary school closes. The first courses should be available from September 1988. The centre will operate as an out centre of the Rupert Stanley College. The Board's initial plans are that St Thomas' should be used as a base to pull together and co-ordinate all the existing out centre provision in the West Belfast area. Accommodation is available to go well beyond this and the speed of providing additional facilities will depend on the availability of additional funds to the Belfast Education and Library Board. Further consideration should, however, be given to the more radical possibility of a new free-standing institution a la Baker catering for the whole of West Belfast which would draw together education and training with a very strong employment orientation.
- i. **School/Industry links:** There is a clear acceptance in the education sector - including the West Belfast schools - of the need

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to provide firm links between school and industry/commerce. Most secondary intermediate school pupils now have work experience, although the position is not quite so good in the grammar school sector. There is also a wide range of initiatives aimed at improving pupils' understanding of the world of industry and commerce. Many of these are sponsored by industry and West Belfast schools are active participants in many of them.

- j. DENI and DED should, however, seek to investigate ways of forging even stronger links between West Belfast schools and employers. One way of doing this would be to consider the development of compacts on similar lines to those which are being established in inner cities in England and Wales. The basic idea behind compacts is to establish firmer and more formal links between groups of school in an area and commercial/industrial interests. Industry will spell out to the schools the standards which it would expect of pupils - academic standards, attendance record, initiative, self-confidence, etc. The schools in turn will make every effort to underline these standards to the pupils and help them to achieve the targets (there is also an expectation in compacts that firms involved with them will give pupils who achieve the necessary standards some preferential treatment in terms of recruitment, either to employment or to training schemes. This is probably attractive in some areas of England where there are already indications of future difficulties in recruiting school leavers - but the application of this final part of the equation may be more difficult in Northern Ireland. DED and DENI should, however, urgently investigate the possibilities).

17.4 Action on Health and Social Services

- a. The Eastern Health and Social Services Board (EHSSB) employs about 7000 people in the area - over 5000 of them in the Royal Group of Hospitals. Many of the professionals come from outside

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but the ancillary and supporting staff on this site generally live in the area. EHSSB with DHSS intend how to plan the future development of the Royal and Belfast City teaching hospital sites to ensure complementary working. From a West Belfast perspective, it will be important to take into account the employment implications of future developments, and to enhance the environment of the Royal Victoria Hospital site. For example, an urgently needed multi-storey car park would provide jobs during its construction and improve both the poor environment of the site and the morale of staff, patients and visitors.

- b. Community health and social services are well developed in West Belfast, but the problems remain stubbornly evident in the indicators of deprivation. DHSS should be resourced to invest further in the area, both through EHSSB and through community organisations. Studies in such areas as Moyard showed real potential for community involvement in improving health, and a major drive on health promotion and improvement of seriously low immunisation rates would be of particular benefit. Local communities should also be given practical encouragement to devise ways of tackling problems of social need in their neighbourhoods. Community initiatives for young people at risk of offending have been funded by DHSS on an ad hoc basis. Increased resources would enable secure and continuing funding to be provided for projects of this kind, and for playgroups, family centres, women's and other community groups which harness the energy and commitment of parents and local volunteers in tackling the serious problems of deprivation in the area, and the negative impacts on families and children.
- c. Primary care remains the weakest link in the chain of health provision. Family doctors and other practitioners working in the

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area generally do not live there, and services at night and weekends depend heavily on deputising agencies and the hospital accident and emergency department. DHSS, in developing primary care on foot of the recent national White Paper and of parallel Northern Ireland consultations, should pay particular attention to promoting the improvement of these services in West Belfast.

17.5 Action by the Public Sector

- a. Additional resources should be made available to all the key public agencies operating in West Belfast to enable them to accelerate action on capital projects and to improve the delivery of services, with priority being given to expenditure which creates employment in the area.

- b. The major public agencies operating in West Belfast should, in carrying out their responsibilities, take further steps to improve and maintain the physical environment. In particular, DOE should take the initiative in identifying, in collaboration with local communities, opportunities for appropriate environmental improvement works. It is recognised that major schemes such as Colin Glen will be rare, and such an initiative could therefore mean being prepared on occasions to undertake substantial works which might have relatively short-term life, given the possibility of subsequent re-development of sites, either by private or public sector initiative. To set against this, clean and well-maintained environment is itself an inducement to private sector investment and is vitally important to community morale. It is for decision at what level expenditure for such a programme should be fixed; but a programme costed at £1 million per annum seems a reasonable objective. A radical approach would be to look for quite substantial job creation through community activity at the micro or estate level; to "grid" the whole area and look most

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intensively at the opportunities to take better care of the physical environment and its inhabitants. Organisations such as "Extern" and BUWS could be useful here.

- c. DOE should, through locally based Action Teams, take the lead in co-ordinating and supplementing the efforts of public agencies and voluntary bodies in improving delivery of services on the ground.
- d. Two Belfast Action Teams (BATs) were created and operational from 1 April 1987 in the Lower Shankill/Lower Falls and the Duncairn/New Lodge area. As from 1 April 1988 a further two Teams are operational - one in the east of the city and the other in the Whiterock/Turf Lodge/Highfield/Springmartin area. It is recommended that a further four Action Teams be created during the financial year ending 31 March 1989 and be operational in the north and west of the city. Each Action Team will require additional funding of £½ million per annum and additional funding of up to £½ million per annum for schemes in each adjacent area which may contribute to meeting the needs of the Action Team area. The precise delineation of each Action Team would be determined by the Inter-departmental Working Group established to oversee the work of the Teams, but areas emerging for consideration include Beechmount, St James, Clonard, Woodvale, Mid and Upper Shankill, Ardoyne and Oldpark.

17.6 Action through the Voluntary Sector

- a. Government should work closely with community and voluntary agencies in developing and strengthening their contribution to tackling West Belfast's problems. In particular, Government should encourage community development initiatives which would be 'owned' by local community groups (of a responsible kind) and which might lead over time to the stimulation of an enterprise culture.

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18. Successful action along the lines of such an Action Programme depends heavily upon progress on eliminating terrorism, vandalism and racketeering, and in building confidence in the security forces and the courts which will enable the image of the area to be substantially improved and help to achieve greater social stability. If the objective of public sector initiative is as we believe it ought to be, to act as a catalyst to much greater private sector interest and involvement, then it must be understood that the achievement of this critical take-off point will require a combination of social and economic action measures with marked improvements in restoring some peace and stability to the area.

POLICY EVALUATION OF AN ACTION PROGRAMME

19. It is essential that, if proposals for an Action Programme are adopted, implementation should be methodically monitored and evaluated. A basis for such evaluation, prepared by PPRU, is attached as Annex V.

THE WAY FORWARD : MACHINERY

20. The existing machinery for handling Belfast issues is described in Annex VI. There is at present no special machinery for West Belfast as such.
21. We believe that new machinery will be required to drive forward new measures for West Belfast, and that it must be capable of
- a. developing the details of an Action Programme, including the sharp definition of action points with measurable targets;
 - b. ensuring the implementation of such a Programme, involving the effective integration of action across departmental boundaries;
 - c. taking decisions about the deployment of any additional dedicated resource for West Belfast; and
 - d. monitoring effectiveness and reviewing overall progress.

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However, we take the view that a wider BUA perspective must be maintained. We have already argued that the problems faced by residents of West Belfast will never be solved by action confined to that geographical area; we have to continue to acknowledge the needs of those who live outside the area as well as those who live within it; and we see a continuing need to keep clearly in mind the potential importance of developments elsewhere in the city, and in particular in the city centre and at Laganside, for all the people of Belfast. Our aim must be to secure for the residents of the more deprived areas "a piece of the action".

22. It is against this background that we have addressed the question of how the existing machinery, with Mr Needham as "Minister for Belfast", the arrangements in DOE (as the lead Department) supported by advisory and co-ordinating machinery, and the developing network of Action Teams, might best be reinforced. We are struck by the extent to which the problems requiring to be urgently tackled are social and economic, as well as environmental. This is not to suggest that the DOE as a Department does not have an economic as well as an environmental role; indeed much of the potential for future employment in the whole Belfast area may well lie in the field of commercial development, where DOE has been an increasingly effective facilitator, rather than in the field of manufacturing industry. Nevertheless the role of a Department with its own distinctive functional responsibilities in pulling together a wide-ranging inter-departmental and inter-agency programme will never be an easy one. If we have an Action Programme for West Belfast, to what extent can it be driven forward through what is essentially co-ordinating machinery? May it not, rather, need to be managed?
23. This question of organisation was not one which the Study Group could resolve itself. The views on organisation which follow are therefore my own, although I put them forward after discussion with senior colleagues.
24. Firstly, I do not believe it would be practicable, without a harmful degree of disruption, to set up a multi-functional authority for Belfast, involving the

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hiving off to it of a number of the responsibilities of existing Departments and agencies as they relate to Belfast, with their associated budgets. A fortiori, I think it would be a mistake to set up a public sector West Belfast Authority, since this would carry the unrealistic implication that the problems of the area could be solved within the area.

25. I have considered most carefully whether a useful part could be played by some form of Belfast Development Agency or corporation. While such a body has an obvious function where, as in Laganside (and possibly the Harland and Wolff side, if the worst were to happen there) there is a large area of vacant or under-used land to be managed, marketed and developed, it has much less relevance in a situation such as that in West Belfast where there is a shortage of land for development and where a Development Agency would almost certainly find itself cutting across the lines of responsibility of existing agencies to no very obvious purpose.

26. What we should do, in my view, is
 - a. to build upon, and stiffen up, the existing machinery for dealing with Belfast as a whole; and

 - b. to supplement this with a small, influential group at the centre to agree in detail an Action Programme for West Belfast, to decide how any resources dedicated to additional efforts for the benefit of West Belfast are to be distributed to spending agencies and Departments, and to oversee and monitor progress towards the objectives set for the Action Programme.

27. The stiffening of the machinery of Belfast as a whole should involve
 - a. bringing effective and forceful private sector representation into the Belfast Co-Ordinating Committee;

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- b. measures to ensure that it is not regarded as a "DOE show" and that other Departments and agencies show the necessary degree of commitment to it; and
 - c. the extension of the BATs approach as already recommended, with an officer in the Belfast Development Office (probably at Senior Principal level) who would be o/c Belfast Action Teams and effectively "Mr West Belfast" at the working level.
28. I would propose to chair the central group myself. It would, in effect, operate as a sub-group of PCC and, while we would aim to keep the membership to a carefully selected minimum of senior people (mainly at Under Secretary level) it would need to have access to all Departments (and through them to the relevant agencies). If such a group is to be successful in driving forward an action programme for West Belfast it will need to be serviced by a small full-time central unit with very close links to the new SP post in the BDO (including, in effect a central unit/BDO joint secretariat). This unit should also be in a position to tap into relevant consultancy advice (and one obvious possibility would be to use PA Cambridge Economic Consultants who are assisting DTI in comparable areas of activity). We could also explore the possibility of associating with the unit, perhaps on a part-time basis, a person with substantial private sector experience. I would recommend that such a group should report to the Secretary of State through Mr Needham as "Belfast Minister".
29. I envisage, then, that DOE would be confirmed as the lead Department in terms of the physical development and infrastructure of the whole of Belfast, including carrying forward the Belfast Urban Area Plan and its work in relation to Laganside and the City Centre. The Belfast Co-ordinating Committee, chaired by the DOE Minister, would continue in place as a valuable piece of machinery, especially from the political and presentational points of view, in involving local politicians, the heads of key public agencies and hopefully also representatives of the business community. DOE would continue to be

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responsible for the Belfast Action Teams and the Belfast Development Office will need to be strengthened to support the additional teams. But there would be a new central group supported by a small unit to make recommendations to Ministers on the details of an Action Programme for West Belfast and on the allocation of any dedicated resources to push it ahead, and to monitor and evaluate progress. I envisage that this central group would also control and allocate any additional resources available to cope with downside industrial developments in East Belfast. It should not be described, or thought of, as solely a West Belfast or Catholic West Belfast group. Its remit could be thus defined: "to make recommendations as to the specific allocation of any additional funding made available for the BUA in order to improve social and economic conditions in general in such a way as to secure the maximum benefit for most disadvantaged individuals, groups and areas and above all to improve fitness for and access to work".

THE WAY FORWARD: RESOURCES

30. The major elements of additional expenditure suggested above are:-

30.1 Action Programme**a. Employment**

Special support for enterprise culture
Extra ACE jobs
LEDU proposals

b. Labour Market

Extra Job Markets
Extra Job Clubs
Additional training measures

c. Education

Provision of nursery schools
Improving standards in primary and secondary schools
Extending further education
Developing schools/employers links

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THE WAY FORWARD : TIMING AND PRESENTATION

34. The problems of Catholic West Belfast have a very high profile. The SDLP have sought and achieved substantial publicity for their recent approaches to Government; Bishop Daly and the church, with other interests in Belfast, know the problems are being examined afresh; we are committed to discussion in the Intergovernmental Conference with the Irish. In these circumstances it seems to me inconceivable that we should 'proceed by stealth'; some early public pronouncement is inevitable. But we shall have to be very careful about what we say. There will be some crude political reaction on the lines of "Do you have to kill British soldiers in full public view in order to benefit from a cornucopia of assistance?" (and not necessarily from Northern Ireland alone). The Deputy Lord Mayor of Belfast, Mr Coggle, has recently made an approach to seek an opportunity to argue for Protestant West Belfast's share of "the £100m we have decided to give the SDLP" (which of course we have not). There is certainly genuine need in Protestant as well as Catholic West Belfast, and in other parts of the City and Province (let us not forget Londonderry and Strabane). There are the industrial clouds gathering over East Belfast.
35. Nor are these the only constraints. There is as yet no agreed solution to the Mackie's problem, and until we see a way ahead on this issue we had better hold our fire. A declaration of goodwill for West Belfast followed by the closure of Mackie's could only provoke hollow laughter. We believe that any effort on the scale truly required by the horrendous nature of the problems will require new resources; but a case for such resources will need to be carefully mounted convincingly argued and cannot be certain of success. If it came to it, we could certainly mount some extra effort by a shift in internal priorities; but there are lots of pitfalls here, not least the fact that virtually all areas of Northern Ireland have high unemployment by GB standards. Some of the efforts we want to make on the ground are more likely to succeed if not too vigorously trumpeted; this has been the case so far with the Belfast Action Teams, which have been looking for credibility through results. If civilian officials are perceived by the IRA to be overtly the leaders in a strategy of "killing terrorism by kindness" they could be at actual personal risk. The area's

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poor morale flows in part from past failed initiatives; we must not be in the game of raising unrealistic expectations. People in the area must understand that, while the present degree of violence continues, no economic magic wand is available to Government.

36. I would make a distinction between releasing what we now know about conditions in the area, and saying what we intend to do about them. When Dr Hendron and his colleagues met us on Good Friday, they urged that various basic data should be collected and made available to the public (inter alia to guide their own future thinking on the issues). A great deal of such data was in any event readily available; other material was compiled for this study; and further work is being urgently done. I can see no sound reason for not releasing such data in the near future. It will, of course, not bring many plaudits for the performance of Government in West Belfast to date; but any policy of reasonably open government must bring such information into the public domain. We released very detailed information on disparities in employment opportunity before we decided in detail how to improve the situation; and it seems to me that disclosure of the dimensions of a problem may often be a necessary pre-requisite for solving it. Such a release of information would, of course, best be made alongside a declaration of intent to take action and Annex VII is the draft of such a declaration. I would not, however, envisage any such publicity before

- (a) we know the way ahead on Mackie's; and
- (b) we have had an opportunity to discuss our proposed general approach with the Irish.

CONCLUSION

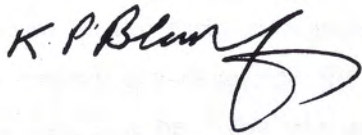
37. The Secretary of State is invited to agree that:-
- a. the unique combination of acute social and economic problems and political and security considerations demand special measures in West Belfast;

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- b. an Action Programme, along the lines described in this submission, represents the best way of targetting action on the key issues;
- c. in addition to strengthening the Belfast Development Office to support an expanded Action Team Programme, there should be new central machinery to handle Belfast issues;
- d. there should be an early release of information about the nature and dimensions of the problem with a declaration of intent by Government to take more effective action; and
- e. that a decision on whether extra resources, in the region of £75m-£100m over the next 5 years, can be found should be addressed in the context of a decision on whether to mount a bid for an increase to the NI block.



K P BLOOMFIELD

11 April 1987

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