

Jan → this is the G15 Press Pack
for Clinton
① Copy to Miss Menard
+ Mr. Allen

② Put on Clinton visit file.
I suggest we have two files - one for
policy Hqs. + the other for
press releases such as
this.
JW

ECONOMY

Northern Ireland, which has a population of 1.6 million and is the smallest region of the United Kingdom, is currently enjoying economic expansion, with output and employment rising and unemployment falling.

Northern Ireland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is approximately £12.4 billion (1993) which is 2.3% of the UK total.

The civilian working population (employees, self-employed and unemployed) is approximately 734,000 (1994).

Recent Economic Performance

The overall growth of the Northern Ireland economy tends to be broadly similar to the UK average. However, the recession of 1990-92 impacted less severely in Northern Ireland than in the UK as a whole for several reasons including the improvement in competitiveness of Northern Ireland manufacturing as measured by unit wage costs.

Expansion -

- **Output:** in the year ending March 1995, manufacturing output grew by 7.2%, this compared with growth of 3.6 in the UK as a whole.
- **Employment:** the number of employees in employment rose by 10,630 in the year ending June 1995 to reach 566,550. This yearly rise of 1.9% compares favourably with growth of 1.1% in the rest of the UK over the same period.
- **Unemployment:** the number of unemployed (adjusted for seasonal variations) has declined by 9,300 (9.6%) over the year to August 1995 to a total of 87,300.

Unemployment

A major economic problem in Northern Ireland is the rate of unemployment, 11.6% of the workforce seasonally adjusted at August 1995, which is persistently higher than the rest of the UK (8.2%). In some areas male unemployment is especially severe.

Of the total unemployed, around half are classed as long-term unemployed ie for one year or more.

These high levels of unemployment can be explained to a large degree by labour supply pressures. Because of a relatively high birth rate, the natural rate of increase in population is much higher than any other UK region. As a result, the numbers seeking employment tend to exceed the growth in jobs available. While historically the difference has been largely offset by net outward migration from Northern Ireland, this has not been enough to eliminate the differential.

Among measures to combat unemployment is a new pilot Community Work Programme to bring people who are unemployed for more than a year back into a working environment through the opportunity to work for the benefit of the local community. They have the opportunity to receive training and are paid more than they would receive on state benefit.

Living Standards

- Personal disposable income per head in Northern Ireland is 93% (1993) of the UK average. The gap is less than for GDP per capita and reflects the distributional effect of Government transfers eg social security benefits and taxation.
- Average gross weekly earnings in Northern Ireland are lower than those in the rest of the UK. Males earn around 88% of the Great Britain average and females earn around 91% (April 1994).

The Peace Dividend

A permanent end to violence and the creation of a more peaceful and stable environment could bring wider economic benefits to Northern Ireland. Increased inward investment could result in up to 10,000 additional jobs by the year 2000. In addition, peace could remove many barriers for existing industry which, depending on the rate of economic growth, could create an additional 5,000 jobs in the manufacturing and tradeable services sector over the next five years. Trade with the Republic of Ireland could be expected to rise significantly.

Finally, increased tourism could result in up to 20,000 extra jobs in Northern Ireland; this could benefit rural areas of Northern Ireland and could have a particular impact in many communities close to the Border with the Republic of Ireland.

Latest Economic Surveys

Surveys are indicating that economic activity remains strong and prospects for the economy are encouraging due to the levels of local business confidence and strong investment intentions.

Prospects - Latest Economic Surveys

The First Trust Bank Business Outlook and Economic Review

(May 1995) expects Northern Ireland GDP to grow by 3.5% in 1996. The report forecasts a rise in employment of 4,000 in 1996. Unemployment is forecast to fall by 2,000 next year. The First Trust Bank reports that "the overall message from the Northern Ireland industrial sector is one of buoyancy, export-led growth and optimism."

The CBI Northern Ireland Business Confidence Survey No 79

(September 1995) reports that confidence in the Northern Ireland economy remains strong, while the positive trend in companies' own business confidence is continuing. Northern Ireland market demand remains steady while GB market demand has weakened somewhat. The strong positive trends in both export and Republic of Ireland market demand continue. Numbers employed in companies surveyed increased and capital investment intentions continue to hold up well.

The PA Consulting Group Quarterly Survey of Business Prospects

(August 1995) covering Northern Ireland manufacturing reports that investment intentions and orders on hand are both up on their levels of 12 months ago. The manufacturing companies surveyed expect a rise in employment of 1%, over the next 12 months. Overall, PA describes business prospects as "'sunny-side up' for the industrial economy" and highlight "very promising" manufacturing investment intentions.

For more information contact The Northern Ireland Information Service, Stormont Castle. Telephone (01232)528216; 528220 or 528221.

INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT

Background

Northern Ireland's manufacturing industries fall into four main categories: engineering and allied trades; food, drink and tobacco; textiles; and clothing. Other industries include chemicals, printing and packaging, plastics, cement, furniture, pottery, industrial ceramics and tyre manufacture.

Employment patterns demonstrate that jobs in agriculture (the largest industry), construction and, in particular, manufacturing, have declined over the past decade. However, in the service sector employment has been rising since the 1980s largely due to the growth in retailing, hotels and catering, and business services.

Within manufacturing, engineering, which employs some 29,000 workers (1994), covers a wide spectrum of general and specialised engineering. Shipbuilding and, in particular, aerospace have been mainstays of this sector but in recent years new engineering operations have sprung up turning out products such as automotive components and communications technology. Northern Ireland now boasts a very strong technological base.

The food processing industry is of crucial importance to the economy. With direct employment of almost 20,000 its use of home-produced raw materials underpins many of the 55,000 jobs in agriculture.

Northern Ireland, which has led the world in the production of linen, developed its skills into more modern fibres and boasts a substantial textiles and clothing sector. It has an important carpet manufacturing sub-sector.

Craft industries such as hand-cut crystal glassware and parian china also play a significant role.

Overseas Investment

Half the manufacturing workforce is employed by around 180 companies whose origins are outside Northern Ireland - either from overseas or from the rest of the UK. These include long-established investment from US companies such as Du Pont, Ford and United Technologies. More recent US investments include Seagate, Fruit of the Loom and Schrader.

Overall, Northern Ireland has seen a marked growth in overseas manufacturing investment (as well as an encouraging amount of R&D investment), a trend that was obvious long before recent peace developments.

The recent record underlines the fact that Northern Ireland is an industrial location of world-class quality. During 1994/95, for example, it won three times its per capita share of all greenfield investment coming into the UK. In that year the Industrial Development Board for Northern Ireland announced 31 projects from overseas investors, representing an investment of £226m.

Among the leading international names making recent investments are Fujitsu, Daewoo Electronics, Northern Telecom and NACCO Materials Handling. For these investors, Northern Ireland has provided a secure foothold in the European Union and many now claim their new plants are among the most profitable within their organisations world-wide.

Elements of Success

There are several factors which persuade multinational companies that Northern Ireland is a location where they can maximise profitability:

Costs are now among the lowest in Europe, including those for labour. Low accommodation costs and the fact that all manufacturers are exempt from property taxes combine to ensure that operational costs for a company in Northern Ireland can be much lower than in many other areas in Europe.

The quality of the labour force has been a prime persuader for many new investors. Not only is labour abundant, but it is flexible and adaptable and there are fewer industrial disputes per head than most other parts of Europe. A further important benefit, particularly for high technology industries, is that young people entering the local labour force are among the best educated anywhere.

Financial incentives available through the Industrial Development Board come in the form of a comprehensive and flexible package that includes generous depreciation allowances, revenue grants to help with start-up costs, training, interest relief, marketing development, and capital grants of up to half the cost of buildings, machinery and equipment.

The highly-developed *infrastructure* offers state-of the-art telecommunications links via a recently completed £100 million digital fibre-optic network as well as cost-effective access by road, air and sea links to every major international market.

The *quality of life* in Northern Ireland is high, and acts as a strong incentive to investors who expect their executives to live in the region. Northern Ireland has the lowest crime rate in the UK and one of the lowest in the western world. It has low house prices, a variety of sporting facilities, restaurants, entertainment and cultural events and some of the best scenery in Europe.

Support for Industry

As well as the comprehensive package of assistance for new overseas investment, the Industrial *Development Board* provides a range of support services for indigenous industry and has been instrumental in promoting major improvements in competitiveness by Northern Ireland companies.

The task of ensuring that Northern Ireland has the skills needed for economic development falls to the *Training & Employment Agency*. It provides skills training through its own network and also appoints and funds around 140 independent training organisations run by commercial, community or voluntary groups. Its Employment Service has 30 job markets which display details of job vacancies and provide careers and training advice. To assist companies to increase international competitiveness, the Agency has a range of training, company and management development programmes and it offers training and recruitment services tailored to the individual needs of companies investing in Northern Ireland.

Another Government agency, the *Industrial Research and Technology Unit*, spearheads science and technology support for industry, focusing efforts on promoting innovation and technology transfer. With funding from Government, the European Union and the International Fund for Ireland, it offers a wide range of programmes providing financial support. Programmes embrace both applied industry/university collaborative Research and Development and market-led product and process development. Support is also available for enhancing and establishing R&D infrastructure.

Northern Ireland has a strong enterprise culture which has produced many entrepreneurs. A specially-tailored range of measures to develop and help small companies is delivered by the Government-funded *Local Enterprise Development Unit*. It helps firms at various stages in the cycle from pre-start up onwards.

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REGENERATION

In many senses, the economic and social problems of the cities, towns and countryside of Northern Ireland are the same as those that afflict many other developed countries going through the transitions of the late 20th century.

In the case of Northern Ireland, many of the problems have been compounded by the effects of more than two decades of violence. The solutions have required the imaginative application of the combined skills and money of government and the private sector along with the commitment and enthusiasm of local communities.

The results have led to a sharp reduction in social ills, they have transformed the appearance of many run-down areas and they have encouraged a very high degree of involvement by the local population.

Urban Regeneration

The work of regenerating cities and towns of Northern Ireland is undertaken mainly by the Department of the Environment for Northern Ireland under a variety of schemes to stimulate private enterprise and investment, improve the physical environment and promote economic regeneration. Funding comes not just from Government but from the International Fund for Ireland and from the European Union.

As the peace process continues, the expected benefit of increasing inward investment will add to the substantial progress that has been made in the inner city areas of Belfast and Londonderry and elsewhere.

In **Belfast** very significant steps have been taken to combat social deprivation through the provision of urban development grants and specific initiatives to involve the community.

Since the mid-1980s, actual and planned investment by the private sector in Belfast city centre has exceeded £600m. Future plans include a continuation of the large-scale Laganside development of the city's riverside areas which aims to attract some £500m of private investment to 120 acres of vacant land near the city centre.

A specific action programme called Making Belfast Work was launched by the Government in 1988 to address more effectively the economic, educational, social, health and environmental problems facing people in the most disadvantaged areas of Belfast.

This initiative is making more work available and developing new businesses; it is improving people's ability to compete for jobs; and is improving living conditions and the environment. It involves the community, voluntary workers and the private sector in a close and fruitful partnership with Government.

Under the aegis of Making Belfast Work more than 3,000 jobs have been promoted in small business; 4,000 jobs have been created or renewed in industry; advance factories have been built; 500 community jobs made available each year; further education places provided for 6,300 students; open learning facilities provided for some 40,000 people; £14m spent on major community economic regeneration schemes; and 250 additional nursery school places created.

The spirit of the communities of Belfast is perhaps best exemplified by the Flax Trust, the brainchild of Father Myles Kavanagh. Against all the odds in a strife-torn area of Belfast, he has conceived the trust and with it the largest business centre in Northern Ireland equally involving people from both traditions. His project has created youth training programmes, support structures for new business ideas, community-run social services, and a joint venture with Bombardier Shorts, Northern Ireland's largest manufacturer. In addition, Father Myles has developed Novatech, a cross-community and Northern Ireland-wide project which locates small quickly-growing companies from outside the European Union, mainly in North America, who want to expand into European markets. So far ten companies have started up, making products as diverse as weight-loss cookies and electronic monitoring equipment.

Northern Ireland's second city, **Londonderry**, has also experienced serious deprivation and has levels of unemployment significantly higher than the Northern Ireland average. Government-led programmes of physical and economic regeneration have led to the transformation of the heart of the city through property development, environmental improvement and major investment in retail centres, office blocks and cultural and entertainment facilities, generating some 3,000 new jobs. Outside the city centre large infrastructural projects have included a new bridge across the Foyle, a new seaport and a greatly improved airport. There has been extensive industrial development in the form of major new industrial plants and business parks.

A special Londonderry Initiative, following the format of Making Belfast Work, is providing resources of £18 million over six years to assist people to find jobs, develop the infrastructure to encourage private investment, help disadvantaged groups, stimulate community involvement and upgrade the physical environment. Major efforts are being directed at marketing and promoting the image of the city to attract both tourists and business investment.

A distinctive feature of the regeneration of Londonderry has been the close involvement of Derry City Council and local community groups, all of which are cooperating with the statutory agencies. In addition, a local business group, North West International, has established trade links throughout the US and Europe. A City Partnership Board, representing public, private and voluntary interests, has recently been established to chart a long-term strategy for the city.

Outside Belfast and Londonderry, Government has directed funds towards the regeneration of the city of Armagh and towns such as Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Downpatrick and Newry.

Rural Regeneration

In **rural areas**, national and international funding has been harnessed to tackle the specific problems of smaller communities.

For instance, CRISP (Community Regeneration and Improvement Special Programmes) - using funds from Government and the International Fund for Ireland - has helped small towns and villages suffering from decline. The scheme offers packages of grants and loans to community organisations as well as to commercial property owners to improve the physical fabric all designed to increase confidence in the local economy and encourage more private investment.

In towns such as Coalisland, the dereliction and decay left by the closure of its coal mines and traditional industries was tackled through an investment of £2.7m under CRISP. Subsequently local interests banded together to successfully sell their "look" town as a location for business investment.

Communities along the Border with the Irish Republic have also benefited. For instance, the town of Belleek in west Fermanagh, actually straddles the border. Some £1.9m under CRISP provided a shore base and offices for a company offering cruising vessels on the extensive Lough Erne navigation system, for a tourist information centre and for environmental improvements.

In the countryside of Northern Ireland rural communities from both sides of the political divide are working in partnership with Government to develop their ability to initiate change and plan for the development of their areas. More than £17m has been committed since 1991 by the Department of Agriculture, the IFI, the European Union and local communities themselves to rural development projects that include enterprise, tourism, agriculture, environmental training and community care. The ending of terrorist activity, which affected many of the programme's target areas, will enable communities to co-operate more and to capitalise on their natural attributes.

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TOURISM

Background

Nature has given Northern Ireland a diversity of environment hard to imagine in such a small area - dramatic sea cliffs, sheltered inlets, sandy beaches, mountains, a tree-fringed lakeland, crystal-clear rivers.

Major recent investment in all sections of the tourism industry - accommodation, transport, infrastructure and attractions for visitors - has created a world-class product to offer the tourist.

Economic Significance

In 1994 Northern Ireland attracted almost 1.3 million visitors, the sixth consecutive record-breaking annual figure. Initial estimates show that visits during the first half of 1995 increased by 14% and the final 1995 figures look set to show a substantial increase, particularly in holiday visitors.

Tourism accounts for 2% of GDP. In the Republic of Ireland and in Scotland this figure is 7%. Reducing this discrepancy is a major goal of the Northern Ireland Tourist Board; making up the difference could produce 20,000 jobs over the next five years to service an additional 1 million visitors a year.

Plans for Growth

The private sector will account for much of the future growth. The Tourist Board, together with local authorities and funding bodies such as the European Union and the International Fund for Ireland, will ensure a positive and supportive environment. A key challenge in meeting growing needs will be investment in new accommodation.

Marketing Northern Ireland

A major marketing challenge lies ahead to convert a new level of curiosity about Northern Ireland into dedicated, regular visitors - and this calls for a fundamental change in how Northern Ireland is viewed from abroad.

The Tourist Board's advertising theme in the Republic of Ireland and in Scotland (the closest and most easily targeted markets) has been "The Northern Ireland You'll Never Know. Unless You Go."

The advent of peace in Northern Ireland has increased the attractiveness to tourists of the island of Ireland as a whole. It presents the chance to attract international tourists who have previously declined to venture to the north of the island. This, together with the need to promote shared attractions such as the extensive Erne-Shannon waterway, mean that the Northern Ireland Tourist Board will continue to work closely with Bord Failte, its counterpart in the Republic of Ireland, in international markets.

This year a £6m "Ireland Vacations" TV advertising campaign was shown in the US, Great Britain, France and Germany. This all-Ireland marketing initiative was led by the private sector. In addition, the two tourist boards run joint promotions at international trade shows and have an all-Ireland tourism office in Sydney, Australia.

Many Northern Ireland hotels are signing up with tour operators for inclusion in packages sold world-wide and they report a trend towards longer-stay vacations.

Increasing business

Since the ceasefires hotel room occupancy rates in Northern Ireland have increased by an average of eight percentage points. Enquiries to the Tourist Board's network of nine offices increased by an amazing 76% in the first 8 months of 1995.

The conference market will increase in importance. The Tourist Board's Conference Bureau, established in 1994, advises and assists businesses on choice of location and promotes local facilities. It believes the forthcoming completion of a new Belfast Waterfront Convention and Concert Hall will be a major stimulus to this sector.

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FAIR EMPLOYMENT

Fair employment is central to economic and political development in Northern Ireland - and has long been recognised as such. The Prime Minister, Mr John Major, has described as an essential objective.

Government policy has been to ensure that employment opportunities are open to all and that both communities can fairly participate in the economy. Legislation covering fair employment is probably the most advanced in Europe, with the strongest enforcement powers.

Laws are only part of the process; creating job opportunities through new investment is vital because it can speed the process of redressing imbalances.

Laws

Legislation to deal with discrimination in jobs has been in place since 1976 and was considerably strengthened in 1989 when indirect as well as direct discrimination was made unlawful. The new Fair Employment (Northern Ireland) Act 1989 introduced registration and monitoring by employers of their labour force and committed employers to fair employment practices and affirmative action.

The legislation also established the Fair Employment Commission, an independent statutory body (although funded by Government) which monitors employers and assists those who have encountered discrimination, and the Fair Employment Tribunal, a judicial body which adjudicates in individual cases and which can award damages or order remedial action.

Impact of legislation

In the 1991 Census of Population for Northern Ireland, Roman Catholics made up 39.8% of those in the labour force and 36.3% of those in employment. The extent to which Roman Catholics were under-represented among those in employment was, therefore, of the order of 3.5 percentage points. The difference was more marked among males where Roman Catholics made up 40.3% of those in the labour force and 35.6% of in work. By 1994, about half of this gap had been bridge although there were differences in the public and private sectors.

In public sector employment, the Fair Employment Commission says that - if security-related occupations are excluded -there is no under-representation of Roman Catholics, except at senior levels - but that is diminishing.

At the end of 1994, 42.3% of public sector employees (excluding security-related) were Roman Catholic - two percentage points higher than their representation in the labour force as a whole.

In the private sector, monitoring returns show an increase of 2.6 percentage points to 37.4% in terms of Roman Catholic representation in monitored companies between 1990 and the end of 1994. The main area of under-representation of Roman Catholics identified by the FEC is in large private sector companies, but 40% of their recruits are Roman Catholic.

In US-owned companies operating in Northern Ireland Roman Catholics account for almost 44% of employment, which is well above their overall economic activity levels of 39.8%.

Other Equality Initiatives

Achieving equal opportunity for all cannot be done by any one single measure. Legislation is aimed at redressing imbalances only in the employed population. However, Government is addressing other social and economic issues so that those from either community who are disadvantaged in terms of, for example, unemployment, housing, education, training, access to social services and public services etc, are helped.

The Targeting Social Need initiative is at the heart of the equality strategy and is a public expenditure priority. The initiative aims to identify social and economic differentials and target the resources of relevant Government departments appropriately to ensure imbalances are being redressed.

Support from the International Fund for Ireland and the European Union is also important in this area.

The "Call" for Fair Employment and Investment

This initiative by leading churchmen in Ireland and the United States was launched simultaneously in Washington and Belfast in January 1994. Its main thrust was the need for more investment to create jobs.

The "call" was endorsed by the British Prime Minister, Mr John Major, President Clinton and Mr Dick Spring, Deputy Prime Minister of the Republic of Ireland, as well as by employers, trades unions and community leaders and organisations such as the Irish National Caucus in the US and the Ancient Order of Hibernians.

The MacBride Principles

These nine principles aimed at tackling religious discrimination in Northern Ireland are not as extensive or as enforceable as Northern Ireland law. Moreover, they can only be applied to Northern Ireland companies with US investment or business links, whereas Northern Ireland law covers almost all organisations with more than ten employees. Complying with MacBride legislation could be seen by some potential US investors in Northern Ireland as an unwarranted additional burden and could influence them to invest elsewhere.

Review

Government is keen to ensure that these important policies are kept under regular, independent review. Fair employment legislation is being independently reviewed by the Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights, and US interests wishing to comment or to make suggestions to improve it are invited to make their views known to this commission.

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HOUSING

The sole public housing authority in Northern Ireland is the Northern Ireland Housing Executive. It is the largest authority of its kind in Britain or Ireland; it owns and manages 151,500 homes, has an annual budget of almost £550 million and employs 2,900 people.

The Executive was created in 1971 to improve the delivery of housing functions, improve house conditions and meet housing need. The creation of the Executive took operational housing decisions out of the political arena and into the hands of a professional organisation which is perceived by both communities, especially its tenants, to be fair and even-handed in allocating accommodation.

Achievements

Housing in Northern Ireland has been a success story by any yardstick. At the beginning of the 1970s much of the housing stock was in poor condition. Since then physical housing conditions have improved out of all recognition. In 1974, some 20% of the housing stock was classed as unfit; this was cut by 1991 to under 9%, even despite the fact that the definition of what is a satisfactory dwelling has been made much more rigorous.

The achievements in housing are particularly impressive when viewed against the background of violence and community strife that Northern Ireland suffered and which produced unique problems for the housing authority.

Since 1971, more than 220,833 new houses have been built (at December 1994), which represents 37% of the current housing stock of 600,000. Of the new homes, 34% (75,000) have been built by the Housing Executive.

As well as improvements in housing conditions and in the fairness of administration, the quality of the design of housing developments has vastly improved. Such developments have not just won awards and received praise from international visitors, they have won the acclaim of the people who live in them.

The private sector has made a significant contribution to boosting the quality of housing by responding to market demand. In 1994, 7,689 new starts were built in this sector, the highest number ever recorded. The housing market is a stable one in which both borrowers and lending institutions can make sound investment decisions.

The Objectives

Housing policies continue to address three main objectives:

- ***to increase owner occupation:*** in Northern Ireland home ownership has grown from 51% in 1978 to 69% today. The sale of Housing Executive homes to more than 63,300 tenants has contributed to this, as has the growth of the Co-ownership Scheme which enables people to pay part rent and part equity until they can afford to acquire the full equity in their property.
- ***improving conditions:*** continued improvement of the overall condition of the housing stock is being achieved by redeveloping areas of unfit property by providing grants to the private sector or to people improving their own homes, and by the Housing Executive improving its own stock.
- ***meeting urgent housing need:*** the Executive's urgent waiting list for homes has been reduced from 19,000 in 1981 to around 11,000 today. Although Northern Ireland does not have the visible problems of homelessness seen in some other UK cities, issues such as family breakdown and the needs of single people continue to produce a demand.

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HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES

The Health Service (known formally as the Northern Ireland Health and Personal Social Services) is the biggest employer in Northern Ireland, employing some 60,000 people who work in a variety of hospitals and community settings. Strong links with the region's two universities reflect a commitment to maintain the highest standards of teaching and training.

Under a unique system of integrated health and social care, the needs of the population in the three main areas of care - hospital and community health services, family practitioner services and social services - are all purchased by each of four area Health and Social Services Boards, thus ensuring a continuum of care for the region's population.

The main medical teaching faculty is located at Queen's University, Belfast. Its medical graduates are renowned for their clinical skills, ethical standards and commitment to education. The University of Ulster provides undergraduate and postgraduate nursing programmes and is the largest university-based nursing education centre in the UK.

The Belfast teaching hospitals - the Royal Group of Hospitals, the Belfast City Hospital, the Ulster Hospital and the Mater Hospital - have an enviable reputation for providing high quality medical and nursing care which extends far beyond the boundaries of Northern Ireland.

Northern Ireland welcomes the opportunity to share its expertise, and under the auspices of the Northern Ireland Centre for Health Care Co-operation and Development (NICARE) business links have been forged around the world. Overseas training and consultancy assignments have been carried out in more than 30 countries including countries in Central and Eastern Europe, and developing countries in Africa and Asia. The largest project to-date, involves assisting in a European Union programme, with reforming certain aspects of the health service in Russia. Through NICARE, NI has provided health professionals for hospitals in the USA.

Northern Ireland is also home to companies operating in most aspects of the healthcare industry, from pharmaceuticals and diagnostics to medical electronics.

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EDUCATION

Northern Ireland is proud of its sound reputation for a high quality of education.

Education is administered centrally by the Department of Education for Northern Ireland and locally by five Education and Library Boards. The Boards provide nursery and primary education (ages 4 to 11) and secondary schools (ages 11 to 18) as well as schools for pupils with special needs and colleges of further education (age 16 upwards). Education is compulsory for pupils aged between 4 and 16.

The main categories of schools are:

- ***controlled schools*** provided by the Education and Library Boards and managed through Boards of Governors.
- ***maintained schools***, mainly under Roman Catholic or non-denominational management; they receive grant-aid from the Department of Education. Schools where the curriculum is taught through the Irish language medium are included in this sector.
- ***voluntary grammar schools*** which may be under either Roman Catholic or non-denominational management.
- an increasing number of ***integrated schools*** which aim to educate Protestant and Roman Catholic pupils together.

The running costs of all schools are met in full from public funds and all schools have the opportunity to opt for full funding for capital development.

Integration

Legislation places a duty on Government to encourage integrated education. From small beginnings in a single school in 1984, there are now 28 integrated schools educating some 5,000 pupils.

Curriculum

There is a common curriculum in all grant-aided schools based on six broad areas of study- English, mathematics, science and technology, the environment and society, creative and expressive studies and (for secondary and Irish-medium primary schools) language studies.

The Irish language is taught widely as a subject. Some 700 primary school children are being taught in the three Irish-medium schools fully funded by Government. There are also a number of other all-Irish primary and two secondary schools operating on an independent basis because they have not yet met the criteria for Government funding. The Irish-medium secondary school in Belfast is however receiving the equivalent of US \$160,000 a year from the Government's Making Belfast Work programme which assists projects in disadvantaged areas.

The three main Protestant churches and the Roman Catholic Church proposed a common core syllabus for religious education in schools which is now in operation for the first time ever in Northern Ireland's history.

Further Education

Seventeen Colleges of Further Education offer a wide range of vocational and academic courses on both a full and part-time basis. The colleges seek to respond to the needs of their local industries.

Universities

Almost half of school leavers go to some form of post-school education, more than 20% of these study at university.

Northern Ireland has two universities:

The Queen's University of Belfast provides undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Arts, Economics and Social Sciences, Law, Medicine, Engineering, Theology, Education, Agriculture and Food Science; it has an Institute of Irish Studies.

The University of Ulster (which has four campuses across Northern Ireland) has seven faculties - Art and Design, Business and Management, Education, Humanities, Informatics, Social and Health Sciences, and Science and Technology. It has non-degree courses leading to higher national diplomas.

Both universities have international reputations in the fields of engineering, information technology and bio-engineering.

Statistical summary

- 331,000 pupils attend 1,200 schools
- education spending in 1994/95 was the equivalent to US\$2 billion
- 18,500 teachers are employed
- 32,500 pupils enrolled in universities and teacher training colleges in 1993/94
- in the same year, 76,000 pupils enrolled in full or part-time Further Education Colleges.

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NORTHERN IRELAND AND THE US PRESIDENCY

The people of Northern Ireland are justly proud of the fact that more than a quarter of the 42 US Presidents have had their roots in Ulster.

President Clinton, with ancestral links to County Fermanagh, is the latest in a distinguished line of 13 Chief Executives directly descended from settlers who left the north of Ireland in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Most of these migrants were Ulster Scots (people of Scottish origin, often described in the USA as the 'Scotch-Irish') who have made an immense - and disproportionate - contribution to almost every aspect of American life.

They have been successful in many fields, notably in politics; education; religion; the military; the law; commerce, industry and technological innovation; journalism and publishing; music, the arts and entertainment.

Theodore Roosevelt described the quarter-million Scotch-Irish who had settled the frontier by 1800 as forming "the kernel of the distinctively and intensely American stock who were the pioneers of our people ...".

They did not look backward to the Old Country as so many 'hyphenated Americans' have done. Indeed, it has been argued that they were the first true Americans, owing allegiance only to their new homeland, its government and democratic institutions.

Before and after the Declaration of Independence these ambitious and determined people helped to shape the character of the United States; in so doing, they assimilated so enthusiastically and successfully that most of their descendants don't think of themselves as being anything other than Americans.

That's why the majority of today's US citizens - including many of the estimated 25 million who have Scotch-Irish ancestry - are unaware of the formative influence of the Ulster Scots on the American way of life in general and their remarkable contribution to the Presidency in particular.

Thomson's Flying Eagle

The story of Ulster's Presidential links begins with the Great Seal of the United States . This was designed in 1782 by Charles Thomson, an orphan emigrant from Upperlands, County Londonderry who became Secretary of Congress.

His flying eagle, with the motto he chose from a Latin recipe for a mixed salad 'E pluribus unum' - From many, one - is the Presidential badge of office to this day (and is on every coin and bill in American purses and pockets).

Thomson penned the first draft of the Declaration of Independence before Thomas Jefferson elegantly refined the prose. John Hancock, whose kin were from County Down, was first to sign (with a famous flourish) the final version which had been printed in Philadelphia by County Tyrone-born John Dunlap.

Dunlap , as publisher of the first American daily newspaper, the *Pennsylvania Packet*, has left an indelible imprint on the history of the American Press ; the printing shop where he served his apprenticeship, Gray's in Strabane, welcomes tourists who follow the Ulster-American Heritage Trail across Northern Ireland.

There were at least five other Scotch-Irish signatories: Thomas McKean, Edward Rutledge, James Smith, George Taylor and Matthew Thornton. These delegates were associated with some of the scores of Ulster settlements already prospering by 1776.

The first publication of the text of the Declaration on this side of the Atlantic was in the *Belfast News Letter* (founded 1737), the oldest surviving daily newspaper in the English-speaking world.

The Presidents of Ulster stock

Among the Presidents of Northern Irish origin are the only three Chief Executives in the history of the office who were first-generation Americans: Andrew Jackson, James Buchanan and Chester Alan Arthur.

Andrew Jackson

7th President 1829-37. He was born in the predominantly Scotch-Irish Waxshaws area of South Carolina two years after his parents left Boneybefore, near Carrickfergus in County Antrim. A heritage centre in the village pays tribute to the legacy of Old Hickory, the 'People's President'.

James Knox Polk

11th President 1845-49. His ancestors were among the first Scotch Irish settlers, emigrating from Coleraine, County Londonderry in 1680 to become a powerful political family in Mecklenberg County, North Carolina. He moved to Tennessee and became its Governor before winning the Presidency.

James Buchanan

15th President 1857-61. Born in a log-cabin in Franklin County, Pennsylvania, he cherished his origins: "My Ulster blood is a priceless heritage". The Buchanan family was originally from Deroran, near Omagh in County Tyrone where the ancestral home still stands.

Andrew Johnson

17th President 1865-69. His grandfather left Mounthill, near Larne in County Antrim around 1750 and settled in North Carolina. Andrew worked there as a tailor and ran a successful business in Greenville, Tennessee, before being elected Vice-President. He became President following Abraham Lincoln's assassination.

Ulysses Simpson Grant

18th President 1869-77. The home of his maternal great-grandfather, John Simpson, at Dergina, County Tyrone is the location for an exhibition on the eventful life of the victorious Civil War Commander who served two terms as President. Grant visited his ancestral homeland in 1878.

Chester Alan Arthur

21st President 1881-85. His election was the start of a quarter-century in which the White House was occupied by men of Ulster origins. His family left Dreen, near Cullybackey, County Antrim, in 1815. There is now an interpretive centre, alongside the Arthur Ancestral Home, devoted to his life and times.

Grover Cleveland

22nd and 24th President 1885-89 and 1893-97. Born in New Jersey and raised in New York, he was the maternal grandson of merchant Abner Neal, who emigrated from County Antrim in the 1790s. He is the only President to have served two terms with a break between.

Benjamin Harrison

23rd President 1889-93. His mother, Elizabeth Irwin had Ulster roots through her two great-grandfathers, James Irwin and William McDowell. Harrison was born in Ohio and served as a Brigadier General in the Union Army before embarking on a career in Indiana politics which led to the White House.

William McKinley

25th President 1897-1901. Born in Ohio, the descendant of a farmer from Conagher, near Ballymoney, County Antrim, he was proud of his ancestry and addressed one of the national Scotch-Irish Congresses held in the late 19th Century. His second term as President was cut short by an assassin's bullet.

Theodore Roosevelt

26th President 1901-04. His mother, Martha Bulloch, had Ulster Scots and Irish Huguenot ancestors who emigrated from Larne, County Antrim in May, 1729. No site has yet been established for the ancestral homestead, but Roosevelt's oft-repeated praise of his "bold and hardy race" is evidence of the pride he had in his Scotch-Irish connections.

Woodrow Wilson

28th President 1913-21. His Ulster roots were very strong and dear to him. He was grandson of a printer from Dergalt, near Strabane, County Tyrone whose former home is open to visitors. Throughout his career he reflected on the influence of his ancestral values on his constant quest for knowledge and fulfilment.

Richard Milhous Nixon

37th President 1969-74. His family connections, as with so many of his Presidential predecessors, were to County Antrim. The Nixon ancestors left Ulster in the mid-18th Century; the Milhous family ties were with Ballymoney and Carrickfergus.

Other occupants of the White House said to have some Scotch-Irish ancestry, which has not yet been fully established by genealogists, include Monroe, Truman and Eisenhower.

Tailpiece: Black Night at the White House

Another Ulsterman who occupied the White House - by means far removed from the democratic process - was Major-General Robert Ross of Rostrevor, County Down.

He commanded British troops who marched into Washington DC on the night of August 24th 1814, setting fire to what was then called the Executive Mansion, causing interior damage and blackening its Virginia freestone facade.

So distressed was President Madison's wife Dolley, who had just spent \$26,000 granted by Congress decorating the place, that she is said to have insisted on having the smoke-stained exterior painted white.

It has remained white ever since, but it did not become officially known as The White House until Theodore Roosevelt had the name engraved on his stationery.

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