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Please Doreen file

174/14 2045
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Mrs Cuthbertson
for the Dec (if
we have one)
M
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- cc Secretary
- Mr McCann
- Mr Crozier
- Mr McDonnell
- Mr McConnell
- Mr Buckland
- Mr Henderson
- HODs**

Mr Hamilton

A SPECIAL EC PROGRAMME FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

Your minute of 21 December asked for any further thinking on spending the special EC programme so that we can ensure that the emerging guidelines are in line with our requirements.

The opportunities for this Group to benefit from the new programme are limited and I would be grateful to see the guidelines when they are produced. Nevertheless, in the meantime we have been giving some thought to this matter and set out below are some suggestions which you might find helpful.

The main area in which we could spend some money is in promoting localised renewable electricity generation schemes which can both provide a market for a local product, eg, biomass, and reduce energy costs. Rural industries might also be persuaded to convert to oil based combined heat and power plants. Funds could also be used for the Energy Challenge Programme which has been approved by the Minister (but not so far funded). It is very difficult to put a sensible figure on spending but a sum of £15 million over three years could be dispersed. If you find this acceptable, it would be a relatively simple matter to work up the case into a more sophisticated bid.

The only other firm bid that I have is for a project for part assisting



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employers to undertake Health and Safety audits. This scheme would cost no more than £0.5 million over a three year period.

Looking beyond my own area, we should look at programmes which develop linkages with other parts of Europe, ie to focus our attention outside Northern Ireland rather than on and our problems. For instance, each member state could be asked to identify an industrial sector in Northern Ireland in which they had comparative advantages and which they could help to develop. Assistance could be in the form of secondment of professional/managerial/technical staff, training Northern Ireland personnel overseas, sub contracting, fostering, piggy back marketing, help with product design, franchising, joint ventures, etc. A variant could be the setting up of substantial training opportunities in Northern Ireland for young people from other member states. Northern Ireland could be a pioneer for structured multi-national youth training. In both cases, the benefits would be long term in enabling more and more linkages to be developed, some of which might contribute to downstream economic activity.

In all of this, I hope you will have regard for equality issues. We need to promote child care facilities so that all people can share in whatever economic growth takes place and we need to find new ways of breaking gender stereotyping in jobs. Finally, if the purpose of the package is to develop social cohesion, we should put more money in to training under represented groups in various trades and professions, eg training more Catholics to become engineers, so that employers have a real opportunity to balance their workforces.

D GIBSON

2 February 1995



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