

65/2176/11/93

JARDINE

**Note of a meeting on Protestant Alienation: 25.11.93**

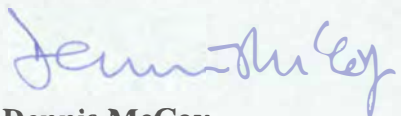
**Present:** Tony McCusker  
Seamus Dunn  
Valerie Morgan  
Colin Knox  
Sam McCready  
Dennis McCoy

**Circulation:** Mr Jardine  
File

- 1 The meeting considered the draft research report from Dunn and Morgan. The report was welcomed as a useful assembly of the attitudes and beliefs which make up the phenomenon of Protestant Alienation. It was agreed that there was little of surprise or novelty in the report, but that it was useful to have the parameters of the phenomenon set out formally. The findings were accepted as read, but I made the point that the (lack of) sampling method and the non-challenging basis of the interviews made it impossible to assess the prevalence of the phenomenon or the conviction with which the attitudes were expressed.
- 2 There was general agreement that there appeared to be a dysfunction between the body of the report and the recommendations section. It was argued that political events and interpretations seemed to be the basis of much of the expressed attitudes, yet the recommendations avoided political areas. Some felt that it was useful to distinguish between the political and the institutional arenas, arguing that it was reasonable to make recommendations about the latter, but that recommendations about the former would be naive if they didn't emerge from a specific political doctrine. Eventually the message permeated that all of the recommendations section was a tad naive and it was agreed that the section should be scrapped in favour of a more substantial conclusion section.
- 3 There was no specific discussion about the next stage of research, but it was agreed that this would be taken up when the group met again to discuss the final report. Points which were mentioned were the desirability of broadening the focus to alienation in general (to include the population as a whole) and the need to examine cleavages other than the Protestant/Catholic one. I suggested that social class should form one axis of future work and that commonalities between the Protestant and Catholic communities should also be examined. The idea of pushing forward with a more general piece of research alongside the setting up of focus groups, which would allow the water to be tested at regular intervals, was accepted.
- 4 Professors Dunn and Morgan undertook to re-draft the document within two weeks. I agreed to supply a list of drafting points
- 5 The question of publication was discussed. Mr McCusker was of the view that, as the existence of the research was already known, there was danger that the report could leak out either in whole or in part. If that were considered a real possibility, he argued, there would be merit in publishing so that we could manage the emergence of the results and provide the right explanations, caveats and briefing. I am very much opposed to this. We all signed up to the quick and dirty study under the express understanding that it

would not be published. I see four main dangers in publication. Firstly, I would not wish to be associated with a piece of published work for which the methodology was so lacking in rigour. Secondly, the views expressed in the document are fairly extreme and we would run the risk of hardening attitudes by publishing them. Thirdly, we have no way of quantifying the extent to which these views are held and so we could not counter media interpretations that this represented a majority or mainstream view (editors will summarily ignore all caveats and health warnings). Fourthly, we gave an undertaking to the other UU researchers that we would not publish the quick and dirty - if we break our word it will make it difficult for us to get this kind of research done again in the future. No decision about publication was taken at the meeting (surprisingly Prof Dunn was not opposed to the idea), but Mr McCusker signalled his intention to return to the issue at the next meeting. I would be grateful for a steer on how likely you think a leak might be. If it is unlikely then the arguments above should hold sway. If a leak is likely then pragmatism might have to overcome principle.

6 Happy to discuss.



Dennis McCoy

25.11.93