

E. R.

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RBS/275/87

cc Mr Burns
Mr Parkes
Mr Chesterton
Mr J McConnell
Mr Wood
Mr Kirk
Mr Hamilton
Mr Templeton

Sir Kenneth Bloomfield

COMMUNITY RELATIONS

I attach a first draft of

1. the speech which the Secretary of State might make at the Hillsborough reception planned for 8 September; and
2. a draft press release.

I have confirmed with Dr Mawhinney that he wishes to make his statement about the initiative in the education field at a later date.

As discussed, CPL are considering how to handle SACHR; the provisional guest list for the reception includes Mr O'Hara, Dr Hayes, Dr McCrudden, Professor Darby and Mr Fisher.

I would welcome any comments by noon on Friday, so that a redraft can be available for Dr Mawhinney to consider over the weekend.

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R B SPENCE

Central Secretariat

26 August 1987

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SPEECH BY SECRETARY OF STATE AT HILLSBOROUGH RECEPTION ON 8
SEPTEMBER

Community Relations

Welcome to Hillsborough.

Pay warm tribute to all those who labour in the very difficult community relations field.

Discussion of Northern Ireland's major political issues usually focuses on better security, the search for acceptable political structures, the relationship between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom and between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

But perhaps the central issue is relationships within Northern Ireland, between

the Catholic/Irish/Nationalist/Republican tradition; and
the Protestant/British/Unionist/Loyalist tradition.

Over the years Government has been seeking to develop clear and sound policies in response to the existence of the two traditions in Northern Ireland - so that those who hold to these traditions can find the means to live together as a single community, not merely alongside each other, but amongst each other.

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I believe that our policies must be

- to seek full equality of opportunity and equity of treatment between the two traditions in Northern Ireland;
- to win acceptance for that principle throughout the community;
- to acknowledge and respect genuine difference where it exists and in a way which does not diminish or threaten the rights of each tradition;
- to increase contact between the two traditions, to try to erode prejudice and suspicion and to build on what the two traditions have in common; and
- to enable a more confident and constructive relationship between the two traditions to develop.

Such an approach requires a change of hearts and minds at all levels in Northern Ireland, but particularly from those who give leadership in every area of activity.

Government has, of course, a crucial responsibility - to formulate and sponsor policies in areas like employment equality, to support those who work to improve community relations and to ensure that equity is the hallmark of public administration.

The Government's responsibility is, therefore, a very wide one, borne not just by the Department of Education as the "Community Relations" Department, but ultimately

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by me and by the Government machine as a whole.

I have, therefore, decided that in order to assist me and Dr Mawhinney - as the Minister with responsibility for community relations - to create new arrangements within Stormont Castle for considering all aspects of the relations between the two traditions in Northern Ireland.

A Central Community Relations Unit will be established which will be under the day to day control of the 2nd Permanent Secretary in the NIO and Head of the NICS. It will be guided by a group of officials drawn from the Northern Ireland Departments and NIO to be chaired by Dr Mawhinney. It will have access to independent outside advice and will work closely with the many interested statutory voluntary bodies who are represented here tonight.

It is my wish that, at the very centre of the decision-making process in Northern Ireland, the crucial community relations issues - in their widest sense - are given the fullest possible consideration. In particular, I will be concerned to see that

- major policy decisions are only taken after careful evaluation of their possible impact on community relations;
- we carry out periodic reviews of the most important policies and programmes to assess their impact on community relations; and

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- we develop new ideas about improving community relations and about how best to support those who are working so hard to improve relations and reduce prejudice.

I hope that you will take heart from what I have said tonight.

Brian Mawhinney - who, I know, is personally deeply committed to this new effort -will be making a further statement in a few days about measures to increase the contribution which education can make in the community relations field.

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POSSIBLE PRESS RELEASE BY SOS

SOS TAKES DIRECT RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY RELATIONS MATTERS

At a reception at Hillsborough Castle on the evening of 8 September, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Tom King, outlined his approach to NI's community relations problems and his intention to be directly and personally involved in tackling these problems.

The Secretary of State said "The Government has over the years been seeking to develop clear and sound policies in respect of the special community relations problems in NI. While we have, to a greater or lesser extent, two traditions, those who hold to these traditions need to find the means to live as a single community, not merely alongside each other but amongst each other. So I believe our policies in this area must:-

- strive to achieve full equality of opportunity between the two traditions;
- identify and build upon commonality;
- acknowledge and respect genuine difference where it exists and in a way which does not diminish or threaten the rights of either tradition;
- do what we can to ensure that the two traditions enrich each other and the whole community;

- increase contact between the two traditions, erode prejudice and suspicion and develop a more confident and constructive relationship between the two traditions in response to the many problems in NI society;

Government has a responsibility to formulate and sponsor policies for the improvement of relations between the two traditions and to take all the steps it can, in the administration of the public services, to improve those relations.

This is a very wide responsibility, borne not just by the Department of Education as the "Community Relations" Department, but ultimately by me and by the Government machine as a whole.

I have, therefore, decided that, in order to assist me and Dr Mawhinney - as the Minister with responsibility for community relations - to create a Central Community Relations Unit within Stormont Castle which will advise me on all aspects of the relations between the two traditions in NI. The Unit will be under the day to day control of the Head of NICS and 2nd Permanent Secretary in NIO, and will be guided by a group of officials from the appropriate Departments chaired by Dr Mawhinney. It will have access to independent advice, and will consult closely with the many interested statutory and voluntary bodies.

I want to ensure that, at the very centre of the decision-making process in NI, the crucial community relations issues - in their very widest sense - are given the fullest possible consideration. In particular, I will be concerned to see that:-

1. major policy decisions are only taken after careful evaluation of their possible effect on community relations;

2. we carry out periodic reviews of the most important policies and programmes to assess their impact on community relations; and
3. we develop new ideas about improving community relations and about how best to support those on the ground who are working so hard to improve relations and to reduce prejudice.

Dr Mawhinney will shortly be making a statement about measures to increase the contribution which education can make in the community relations field.

/JH