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Reference
Copies to: Mr Bourn
Mr Roberts
Mr Beckett
Mr Semple
Mr Farrelly

MR BLOOMFIELD:

ACTION ON SPRUCE-UP DURING CEASEFIRE

1. I have discussed paragraph 1 of Mr Bourn's minute of 9 January on 'Publicity activity during ceasefire' with Messrs Roberts, Beckett (Environment), Semple (Housing, Local Govt and Planning) and Farrelly (Community Relations). They are already aware of the necessity for positive activity by civil departments during the present lull in military action, and the desirability of creating, or identifying for publicity purposes, schemes which indicate a returning normality.
2. We took the reference to 'flying squads' of officials only in the context of the 'spruce-up' campaign. The adoption of such a tactic in relation to the broader provision of services, while attractive in the short term, might easily result in greater frustration in local areas if there were not fairly immediate tangible results (and might indeed jeopardise our more systematic survey of the problems of Areas of Social Need). In relation to spruce-up, we concluded that local communities were more likely to be impressed by work actually done than by discussions, and that the efficacy of schemes must be measured by the impact on the local population in each area rather than in any general media news value, (although publicity would be sought in suitable cases).
3. Our appreciation of the possible 'ceasefire' situation was three-fold:
 - (i) the period of truce extending over the next 10 to 14 days;
 - (ii) a longer period of peace hopefully extending over Easter; and
 - (iii) a longer subsequent period marked by a gradual return to normality.
4. (a) For the first period there can only be a very rapid 'brush and shovel' response requiring a minimum of planning and preparation. Mr Beckett had already anticipated the issues raised in Mr Bourn's minute and taken effective action in consultation with 39th Brigade. Following this arrangements have been made, with Army help, for the removal of vehicle hulks and bulky debris and slogans in Belfast. Mr Beckett has also arranged meetings with the Director of Technical Services and the Head of Cleansing Department of Belfast City Council to ensure their co-operation. It is regarded as desirable that the lead should be taken by the civil authorities with the Army lending support. The Road Service (D of E) is arranging to refurbish

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defaced and destroyed road signs, and, in co-operation with the Army, the removal of ramps where appropriate and the re-instatement of road surfaces. The Army will clean up the defensive impedimenta around Army posts and RUC stations. Mr Farrelly will arrange for his Departmental Liaison Officer at Brigade HQ to bring particular eyesores to the attention of the Army.

- (b) Department of Environment in consultation with the District Council will identify and carry out additional 'spruce-up' schemes where possible in Belfast.
 - (c) It should be noted that funds available for 'spruce-up' have been exhausted and the present scheme expires on 31 March. £4 million had been provided for in SEP proposals now awaiting Ministerial approval.
 - (d) It was suggested (quite seriously) that the RUC might advise city centre stores when it was considered safe to re-open toilet facilities for customers.
5. (a) For the second period it was suggested that 'spruce-up' schemes requiring longer planning and preparation might be set in train.
- (b) It was also suggested that various Departmental proposals for the provision of services in particular areas should be aggregated and presented as a constructive programme either by way of exhibitions and presentations in the locality (with officials available to give information) or by special features in the local papers. It was stressed that only those schemes should be included which were reasonably certain to start within the year.
 - (c) To encourage the greatest degree of self-help among community groups, a 'best improved housing estate' competition might be launched with worthwhile prizes. Mr Semple to consider the Housing Executive involvement, and Mr Roberts to sound the Belfast Telegraph on sponsorship.
 - (d) In the meantime Departments to arrange through their Information Officers the maximum publicity for on-going schemes which would underline both the scope and complexity of civil administration, and the benefits to the ordinary citizen of an extended period of peace and stability.
 - (e) DOE will explore with NIR and Ulsterbus the possibility of an early reinstatement of late night trains and buses.

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6. For the second and third stages, we suggest the setting up of a short-lived Inter-departmental Working Group to 'plan for the peace' by identifying projects already in the pipeline and arranging for suitable publicity through the Information Service.

M N Hayes

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14 January 1975

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