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16 MARCH 1990

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A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY ALIENATION AND GOVERNMENT POLICY IN CATHOLIC WEST BELFAST

I attach the long-awaited SIL paper on Catholic West Belfast in advance of next week's Confidence Issues Steering Group meeting. I am grateful to Mr May for doing all the spade work. As you will see the paper does not offer miraculous solutions to the serious problems still facing Catholic West Belfast but it does, I believe, point up areas where the Government should consider its policies more carefully in the context of our wider objectives.

2. I am grateful to all those who assisted in the production of this paper, and hope it provides a useful basis for discussion

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of the difficulties faced in Catholic West Belfast. The Group will wish to consider what further work if any, should be undertaken in this important area.

Brian Blackwell

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SIL DIVISION
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CATHOLIC WEST BELFAST

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- 1.4 Consideration should be given to collating more statistics for deprived areas to allow better appraisal of policies.
- 2.2 Some people in NI will always withhold acceptance on grounds that British Government is foreign government.
- 2.4 Gains for communities may also result in (especially financial) gains for paramilitary organisations.
- 2.9 The Republican Movement attempts to act as a quasi-Government to the people of West Belfast, ensuring where possible HMG gets no credit for the benefits provided to the people.
- 3.5 Many people in Catholic West Belfast do not trust the security forces to operate impartially.
- 3.7 Consideration should be given to increasing the awareness of policemen and soldiers of the areas in which they are patrolling.
- 3.9 A complete appraisal of the benefits and losses of the current house search policy should be conducted.
- 3.15 'Confidence policies' and effective security policy have the same long term aims, although there may be short-term dislocations.

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- 4.1 The economic activity generated by racketeering is currently crucial to the economic well-being of West Belfast.
- 4.8 The paramilitaries provide a range of transport and social services which are needed by the people of Catholic West Belfast and which will need to continue to exist in some form even if paramilitary influence is removed.
- 5.4 It is important to encourage the people of West Belfast to be more mobile in looking for employment.
- 5.9 Whilst housing is generally of good condition, overcrowding is a serious problem.
- 5.11 No matter what their view of the Government, people in West Belfast seek to maximise the benefits available to them from the State.
- 5.13 The Making Belfast Work project has improved conditions, but there remains a long way to go.
- 5.18 The current community grants policy causes widespread ill-feeling. An appraisal of its benefits might now be due.
- 5.25 Community ownership of projects is important to ensure local acceptance and commitment in future.
- 6.2 Ministerial relations with Sinn Fein are likely to come under close scrutiny in the coming months.
- 6.4 Consideration should be given to making more effort to challenge the paramilitary influence on every day life in West Belfast.

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6.5

It is important for HMG not to be seen to associate too closely with the SDLP, as that may rebound electorally on that party.

6.12

The operation of Belfast City Council should be examined to see whether smaller units would prove more effective administratively.

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