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cc: Mr McConnell

From: Mr T McCusker

4 February 1992

To: Mr N Hamilton

*But  
These are the papers.  
I should have copied  
to you*

*2/14/2*

THE NATIONALIST COMMUNITY

1. I have seen the two recent papers on this subject from Mr Alston and Mr Bell. I have also noted that Mr Fell would either want briefing to attend the proposed VCR meeting or for some of us to represent him.
2. All of this is cast in a very peculiar NIO language but the bottom line appears to be that NIO would like to see greater recognition, both from the Irish and opinion formers in the nationalist community, for those Government policies which have had a positive impact in Nationalist communities.
3. We do of course need to be clear about the objective of this. If, as seems to be the case, the purpose is to try and get greater nationalist appreciation for support of Government programmes then we do need to give serious consideration to the definition of "opinion formers". We seem to have been pre-occupied in the past with nationalist opinion formers in the shape of either the Hierarchy, a few prominent clerics and senior SDLP officials. This may influence to some extent the middle ground but I have serious doubts whether it has any impact at all in working class republican areas or with emerging middle class catholic liberals. (My only

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exception in this might be Bishop Edward Daly in Derry whose standing throughout the community is extremely high and who does not attract the same level of ridicule from PIRA/Sinn Fein as, say, Cahal Daly.)

4. The difficulty with this is that people who might be more critical in shaping opinion at local level tend not to be those who are attractive to the media, and also they are those with whom the system as a whole has little contact. We would therefore need to give serious consideration to this question and try to extend networks of individuals to whom we can explain Government policy in more detail.
5. The second point which emerges from this is the expectation of a quid pro quo in terms of support for Sinn Fein/PIRA and the impact of various socio economic initiatives to tackle disadvantage, particularly that located in nationalist areas. I think there are two weaknesses in this. First, I think it totally over-estimates the nature of the core support involved, and, secondly it also seriously under-estimates the perceived impact of various initiatives in tackling disadvantage and equality issues.
6. The whole rationale behind the TSN programme is that existing policy measures (and presumably we must also include the special initiatives like MBW and Londonderry) are not making a serious impact in changing the relative disadvantage of the catholic community. Therefore, before we go down a path of expecting some kind of quid pro quo we need to be sure that there is something tangible to demonstrate; and that the negative aspects of policy implementation do not out-weigh the positive. We also need to think carefully about the negative aspects of community policing.

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7. Finally, the recent research report on disadvantaged areas which was carried out under the auspices of NIVT, with support from PPRU, has illustrated the positive benefits to be accrued from greater contact between Government, public bodies and local communities. This seems to me to be the best way forward and adds some potency to an on-going debate about a community development strategy. It might be too early to draw comparisons just yet but it seems to me that the current position in Londonderry owes much to the empowerment which has been achieved by that community. It is in my view an unique example of massive community development and we should perhaps give greater thought to how we can actually secure more involvement of communities particularly in Belfast, in the decision making processes which affect their everyday lives.

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