

NOTE FROM THE IRISH SIDECommittee on Relations between the Security Forces and the
Community (CSFC)General Points

1. The recently published conclusions of the 1990 British Social Attitudes Survey, which reveal a serious lack of confidence on the part of the Catholics in the behaviour and accountability of the RUC, the regular Army and the UDR, pose a number of important challenges to the Committee.
2. We remain of the view that the CSFC can and should play a more developed role both in its function as a forum for exchanging and registering information about complaints against members of the security forces and in its related mission to try to identify ways in which the relationships between the nationalist community and the Army can be improved. We, of course, maintain the view that the RUC, as well as the Army, should be fully and directly associated with the work of the Committee.
3. We would hope that the membership of the Committee will give full consideration to the implications of the Social Attitudes Survey. We believe that the Committee's role and value could be enhanced by attaching some degree of publicity to its existence and operations. Moreover, the regular meetings of the Committee could be used to speed up the handling of complaints received, as distinct from the statistical inventory which appears to be the principal focus of the consideration of complaints by the Committee.
4. While this is an RUC-related matter, it would be instructive to have the benefit of the Committee's consideration of the obvious discrepancy between the minimal number of complaints upheld against the RUC and the reported fact that £134,000 has been paid in compensation to 58 clients of one firm of solicitors, arising out of ill-treatment cases at

Castlereagh. It may be noted that the significant number of compensation awards was commented on by members of the UN Committee against Torture, which met in Geneva in November 1991. The Committee will no doubt wish to take into account the considerable interest shown by the UN Committee against Torture on issues such as the introduction of video-recording at the Holding Centres and access to lawyers.

9 January, 1992

Specific Points

5. We think it might be useful for the Committee to look at a small number of specific cases which, in our view, may have a considerable community relations effect:
 - a) the case of alleged sustained harassment and ill-treatment of William McCabe of Newry, and latterly of his brother Patrick. (The log number is 1290: we have given a full account of these cases, which encompass a full range of abuses: harassment, ill-treatment, assault, abusive language, death threats, threatening use of telescopic sights. Underlying all of this is the allegation that McCabe is being victimised precisely because he has invoked his rights and used the complaints procedure and legal avenues open to him);
 - b) the case of the Sweeney family who were subject to harassment at Wattle Bridge PVCP in November, 1991. (Log No. 1340).
6. We remain concerned at the effects on relations between the security forces and the community of the over zealous application of the charge of withholding information, under the PTA. We understand that situations in which persons who are exposed to the ordeal of paramilitary intimidation and also find themselves subject to prosecution under the PTA for withholding information, are a regular occurrence. We are concerned at the impression of a lack of compassion in the administration of justice which undue emphasis on this

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provision could convey. (We raised a recent case on 2 December, 1991 - that of Jim O'Neill of Culloville (Log No. 1342)).

Cathal Crowley
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