

[Paper handed by Mr Trimble to Secretary of State on 31 July: together with NIO commentary]

Measures to build confidence within the pro-union community 31 July 1997

1. **Greater openness and transparency with regard to the operation of the Intergovernmental Conference and the Secretariat.**

Comment: consistent with existing policy, proposals are with Ministers.

2. **More co-operation with the Forum by NIO and facilitation of its restructuring with more committee work and Forum Plenaries limited to receipt of committee reports and general debates say once a month.**

Comment: co-operation is existing practice. Any restructuring is a matter for the Forum itself. (NB: if current negotiations are suspended (as they might have to be on 9 September), then the law requires the Forum also to be shut down - although the necessary order could not be passed until Parliament returned.)

3. **Local government**

- (i) **implementation of Lord Dubs' suggestion of giving Councils a power of general competence and enhancement of their economic development role (see memo herewith);**

Comment: a power of general competence has just been ruled out for England and Wales by the Deputy Prime Minister. We could consult on the current economic development powers and possible enhancement.

- (ii) **a more co-operative attitude by DOE to minor functions for councils e.g. over car parking in towns.**

Comment: matters the UUP might discuss with Lord Dubs.

4. **Community and Cultural Development**

It is clear that the Protestant community is disadvantaged with regard to developments in the above areas. This is partly due to a reluctance to apply, a lack of information concerning the various schemes and of sophistication in framing proposals to meet them, and a belief that these schemes are (designedly?) framed and operated to benefit others.

A more pro-active approach by the NIO is needed to ensure fairness and parity of funding, particularly on heritage matters where the generous provision for Irish language and culture is in stark contrast to the lack of recognition of Ulster-Scots heritage and culture. Note the disgrace that Northern Ireland cannot find

£15,000 per annum to fund adequately its national war memorial at Thiepval. It should be open to the public as it was designed to be and was until the mid 1970s.

Comment: Much is already being done to encourage more positive Protestant attitudes to community development. But, overall, need still remains greatest in Catholic communities. Ulster-Scots is receiving increasing help and Thiepval receives regular maintenance funding.

This is all a sensitive area: it should not be the subject of pendulum swings in policy, back and forth. But some positive words, emphasising equal respect for Protestant and Catholic needs and culture could be used (as they have been already).

5. Implementation of the Coopers and Lybrand report on school funding.

Comment: Ministers have already adopted the core recommendation (a common funding formula): due to be implemented in 1998/99. But care needed to protect ability still to target funds on schools facing greatest educational and social disadvantage.

6. Quangos

To reduce the democratic deficit, more public representatives should be appointed so that at least half the members of those quangos that are discharging a governmental function are elected representatives. Those appointed should be cross-party/cross community in proportion to electoral strength and the individuals should be appointed after consultation with the relevant party leader.

Comment: Difficult issues here: possible conflicts with Nolan procedures for public appointments; potential for strong SDLP opposition; legislation required.

7. Greater openness and fairness in the review of Fair Employment legislation. SACHR is not balanced in community/political terms - see the unfair treatment of Dermot Nesbitt and his dissenting report.

Comment: reflects long-standing unionist opposition to fair employment approach. Government still considering SACHR's recommendations.

8. Assurance on legally held firearms.

Comment: plans to ban all handguns (with exception of personal protection weapons) already postponed at John Taylor's urging. Risk of public controversy, in both GB and NI, if abandoned altogether.

9. Implementation of assurances on parades legislation to Loyal Orders.

Comment: in hand through Parades Bill etc.

10. Vigorous implementation of decommissioning time table in Government clarification to plenary of 16

Comment: timetable set out on 16 July was explicitly conditional on proposals being adopted. They were not. But both Governments committed to all machinery being fully operational by 15 September.