

**NATIONAL ARCHIVES****IRELAND**

**Reference Code:** 2001/43/1386

**Title:** Memo on Northern Ireland reform programme  
by R.A. Burroughs, United Kingdom  
Representative in Northern Ireland

**Creation Date(s):** 20 May, 1970

**Level of description:** Item

**Extent and medium:** 4 pages

**Creator(s):** Department of Foreign Affairs

**Access Conditions:** Open

**Copyright:** National Archives, Ireland. May only be  
reproduced with the written permission of the  
Director of the National Archives.



BRITISH EMBASSY,  
DUBLIN.

12 June, 1970

Dear Sir,

You may like to see the enclosed copy of a letter written last month by Mr. Burroughs in Belfast summarising the present state of the reform programme in the North. Although it is not classified, I should be grateful if you would keep its contents to Irish Government circles.

Yours sincerely,  
John Peck

John Peck

S. Ronan, Esq.,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Department of External Affairs,  
DUBLIN.

49

UNCLASSIFIED

United Kingdom Representative in Northern Ireland,  
Conway Hotel,

Dunmurry, Belfast.

Telephone: Belfast 616286

20 May, 1970

Northern Ireland Reform Programme

I thought I should write to you setting out the current position about the implementation of the reforms agreed upon last autumn between the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Governments.

2. The only major item of the reform package that remains to be implemented is the decision to set up a Central Housing Authority; there is also the associated and consequential question of the future establishment of local government in Northern Ireland (though this is not strictly speaking part of the current reform package, having been set on foot by Mr. Craig as long ago as 1965). The position about these issues is as follows. The Minister of Development announced in an Estimates Debate at Stormont on 29 April that he was within sight of completing his proposals for a new single purpose housing organisation and that after confidential discussions of detail with the local authority associations and other bodies with a substantial interest in housing, he would introduce the necessary Bill before the Summer Recess. This would be accompanied by a comprehensive set of proposals covering all aspects of the new organisation. In the course of the Debate, Mr. Faulkner informed Parliament that he had it in mind that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which would have responsibility for the implementation of overall Government policy in this field, would be assisted by a large Northern Ireland Housing Council, a consultative and advisory body drawn entirely from elected representatives of existing housing authorities and nominated by them. The Executive would be a small and compact body of about nine members to which the Council would elect a number of its members, the balance, which would be in the majority and would include the Chairman, being made up of members appointed by the Minister. The Report of the Review Body on Local Government is now nearing the stage of publication and it is expected that the Stormont Parliament will debate it before the Summer Recess. There will also be need for wide consultation with Local Authority Associations following which the Government would formulate proposals for consideration by Parliament subsequently.

3. When decisions have been taken on the main issues the Local Government Boundaries Commission can begin its work of defining local authority boundaries, using the same procedures and methods as are employed in defining Parliamentary constituencies. Thereafter the ward boundaries within each local authority area will need to be settled. The necessary legislation for this latter stage was passed last Session and is standing ready to be used. An interim Local Government Staff Commission is to be appointed when the review of the structure of Local Government is completed, and this will be converted later into a statutory and permanent part of the machinery.

N. F. Cairncross, Esq.,  
Home Office.

4. The reform programme includes a number of other significant elements, namely those relating to law and order, the combatting of discrimination and remedies for citizens' grievances. The R.U.C. has, in accordance with the recommendations of Lord Hunt's Committee, now been civilianised and carries out its normal duties unarmed. The R.U.C. Reserve, a body of some 1,500 men to be set up under the Police (Northern Ireland) Act, 1970, began recruiting on 11 May. This has got off to a good start. In the first week 550 firm applications were received from a very representative cross-section, and there has also been a large number of preliminary enquiries. The first selection boards are to be held for Belfast and Derry this week, and constables are expected to be ready for duty about the beginning of July. The Ulster Special Constabulary was finally disbanded on 30 April and its duties have been taken over by the Ulster Defence Regiment and the Regular Army. So far a total of over 6,000 have applied to join the Regiment of whom about 1,300 are Roman Catholics, nearly 3,000 are ex-Ulster Special Constabulary and 1,500 ex-servicemen. Some 3,800 have been accepted for enlistment and of these 2,500 are now enrolled as members of the Regiment.

5. As to measures against discrimination, there remains only one out of the sixty-six housing authorities in Northern Ireland that has not adopted the Ministry of Development's model points scheme or an acceptable variant of it: the Ministry continues to urge acceptance on the recalcitrant authority, the Armagh Rural District Council. There has been some trouble over allocations by the Omagh Urban Council shortly before it adopted a points scheme but the Ministry are not satisfied that any substantial injustice has been done. Some forty-five local authorities have made declarations of equal employment opportunity and a further twenty-four have been made or submitted in draft by statutory public bodies. Only four bodies have refused to make declarations and the Government hopes that further discussion will result in these bodies falling into line. A number of public bodies have submitted draft codes of employment procedure to the Government for approval. Among these are fifteen submitted by statutory bodies and a further five by local authorities and local authority associations; this latter figure includes two major model codes which will cover a number of local authorities of a particular type. A draft of an anti-discrimination clause for inclusion in Government contracts, intended to bite on employment practice in the private sector, has been considered by the Cabinet and is now under examination by the several Government Departments concerned. As drafted, the clause, which broadly follows the form of the Fair Wages Clause in Government contracts at home, will extend also to sub-contractors. The review of the law on incitement to hatred on religious grounds continues but I gather that the introduction of legislation is not contemplated, at least for the present. The existing law already provides penalties for incitement that results in disorder and any extension might well give rise to difficulties of enforcement and in certain circumstances bring about a worsening of the situation by making martyrs. Another step towards elimination of discrimination is the action taken by the Ministry of Community Relations in urging Government Departments to have in mind the desirability of representation of the minority in making nominations or appointments to public bodies.

6. The work of the Northern Ireland Commissioner for complaints in considering citizens' grievances was widely commended from all sides of the House during the Estimates Debate at Stormont on 29 April. There has been a significant increase in the number of complaints of mal-administration received since the first report of the Commissioner (H.C.2001) was published earlier this year; at 24 April the total number amounted to 523. The jurisdiction of the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration was extended on 1 April to cover personnel matters in the civil service, including appointments and removals.

7. Finally, although not strictly a part of the reform package, much of the future prosperity of the Province will depend upon the content and success of the Northern Ireland Development Plan. As you know, work on this is far advanced.

8. I am sending copies of this letter to H. M. Ambassador in Dublin, and to Mr. W. K. K. White in the Foreign and Commonwealth Office. Copies also go to Robin North and David Hopkins.

Northern Ireland Reform Programme

I thought I should write to you setting out the current position regarding the reforms agreed upon last autumn between the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Governments.

The only major item of the reform programme which remains to be implemented is the proposal to set up a **Com. (R. A. Burroughs)**. There is also the question of the future establishment of local government in Northern Ireland (though this is not strictly speaking part of the reform package, having been set on foot by Mr. Craig in 1967). The position about these issues is as follows. The Minister of Development announced in an Estimates debate at Stormont on 23 April that he was within sight of completing his proposals for a new single purpose housing commission and that after confidential discussions of detail with the local authority associations and other bodies with a substantial interest in housing, he would introduce the necessary Bill before the Stormont Parliament. This would be accompanied by a comprehensive set of proposals covering all aspects of the new arrangements. In the course of the debate, Mr. Faulkner informed Parliament that it is in mind that the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, which would have responsibility for the implementation of overall Government policy in this field, should be replaced by a large Northern Ireland Housing Council, a representative and advisory body drawn entirely from elected representatives of the existing housing authorities and controlled by them. The Executive would be a statutory corporation of about nine members to which the Council would be a part of its members, the balance, which would be in the majority and would elect the Chairman, being made up of members appointed by the Minister. The report of the Review Body on Local Government is now nearing the stage of publication and it is expected that the Stormont Parliament will debate it before the Easter recess. There will also be need for wide consultation with local authority associations following which the Government would formulate proposals for consideration by Parliament subsequently.

When decisions have been taken on the main issues the local Government boundaries Commission can begin its work of defining local authority boundaries, and the new procedures and methods are employed in defining parish and county boundaries. Thereafter the ward boundaries within each local authority will need to be settled. The necessary legislation for this latter stage was passed last session and is standing ready to be used. An interim Local Government Staff Commission is to be appointed when the review of the structure of local government is completed, and this will be converted later into a statutory and permanent part of the machinery.

W. K. K. White, Foreign Office.  
New Office.