

Report to NIWC on the Forum Education Committee

1. The Forum Education Committee (which is now a standing committee) has the following terms of reference:

To examine the contribution which education services and structures make to the promotion of dialogue and understanding within Northern Ireland and to report to the Forum by 31st December 1996.

2. NIWC nominated a representative to the committee at the beginning of October. The committee had been operating since its establishment on 26th June focussed exclusively on the issue of administrative reorganisation (the proposed reduction of education and library boards from 5 to 3). This was because the Minister, Michael Ancram had announced new proposals but had agreed to delay implementation until October in order to allow the committee to present its views. This 'Interim Report' opposing the proposals was put together on the basis of several weeks of 'hearings' and submissions was adopted by the forum on 4th October.

3. One of the main issues for NIWC is how to engage constructively with the committee. The future priorities of the committee are to be 1. Nursery education; 2. FE - incorporation issues and problems with lack of funding poor outcomes etc. 3. Low qualifications of NI school leavers; 4. Small school protection; (On NIWC's behalf I tabled integrated education but it was not taken up).

4. It remains the case that the Forum education committee is overwhelmingly Unionist in complexion and is not widely stimulating. We need to agree on some rationale for participation in the forum on the limited and limiting basis which is currently available.

Chris Moffat 10.10.96