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L O N D O N D E R R Y

POPULATION MOVEMENT FROM WEST BANK TO EAST BANK

A GENERAL

1. Over the past 10 years there has been a continuing movement of population - almost entirely Protestant (P hereafter) - within Londonderry from the West Bank (WB) of the Foyle (i.e. Donegal side) to the East Bank (EB). There has also been a substantial exodus of P to other parts of NI and to GB.
2. This movement has been particularly marked from around 1972/3 and since so that it does not show up in the 1971 Census figures. Evidence may however be drawn from a variety of sources on some of which this paper will touch.
3. It should be recorded that there has been for many years not only a substantial and growing RC majority on WB but also quite a strong RC minority on EB. The round figures for 1971 were:-

	<u>RC</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Totals</u>
WB	34,500	17,000	51,500
EB	13,000	18,500	31,500
<u>Totals</u>	<u>47,500</u>	<u>35,500</u>	<u>83,000</u>

4. A further point to be noted is that the RC majority on WB is more absolute in the lower age groups and on EB there are probably more RC children than P children of school age.
5. It should also be noted that there is little or no evidence of any substantial RC movement EB to WB. Indeed the West/East movement is not solely a P one but many RC movements have also taken place so that there is ground for thinking that the River Foyle could in the future represent a social divide for some.
6. Clearly the conscious division is unhealthy for many reasons.
7. The population figures quoted in 3 are for the entire Londonderry District.

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## B INDICATIONS OF POPULATION MOVEMENT

1. Some of the evidence of population movement may be drawn from the following on which comment is offered -
  - (a) Local Election results
  - (b) School population
  - (c) Church congregations
  - (d) Housing
  - (e) Clubs/Sporting organisations
  - (f) Businesses/Professions

### Elections

2. In the 1973 Council Elections Unionist WB first preferences totalled 3,968 electing 3 Councillors out of 16. In 1977 they polled 1,970 electing 2 Councillors. (Alliance 1973 - 2,379 - 2 Councillors; 1977 - 1,090 - 1 Councillor). The Unionist candidates attributed the fall in votes to "the drift in population" (Londonderry Sentinel May 25, 1977). Note that on the EB SDLP voters in 1977 elected 4 Councillors out of 11 - an increase of 1 on 1973 results.

### Schools

3. Enrolment in P primary schools on WB was c1,400 in 1968. Today it is c500 some of whom travel from EB. The implications of this portend very serious consequences for Foyle and Londonderry College (merged recently in the face of tradition mainly as an act of self-preservation) and Templemore I.S. (which has a good deal of spare capacity).
4. On the EB a new Controlled PS (Lisnagelvin) was opened in 1978 (incorporating two smaller schools) but another projected PS is now not likely to be built because of lack of demand by P school children. It may be that RC primary school children form a majority on EB at present.

### Churches

5. There has been a drastic fall in the membership of many P Churches on WB. This has been felt by all denominations and many churches are being maintained from a sense of loyalty and tradition. All 6 Presbyterian Churches have been badly affected, the fall in membership approaching one-third overall. This crude statistic conceals the fact that nearly half of their existing membership measured by "families" now live on EB, and of the WB "families" many consist of 1 or 2 elderly persons. One very fine Presbyterian Church (Gt. James Street) building is being closed and put on the open market for sale. A replacement Church (against the judgment of many) is to be built on EB and there are fears that this may in time lead to the closure of other WB Churches.

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- 6. Church of Ireland congregations have also been severely reduced but here again ties of loyalty still bring persons across the River. The relatively new St. Peter's Church built to serve an area of expanding population (Belmont) now finds itself in the midst of an area of very rapidly declining P population.
- 7. Carlisle Road Methodist Church - an excellent building and the only WB Methodist Church - has no longer sufficient numbers to justify the services of a full-time Minister. Two Methodist WB Mission Halls have closed.
- 8. Smaller denominations are in like case, the Baptists, for example, being in search of an EB site for relocation of their Church.

## Housing

- 9. Information from various Estate Agents over a period is to the effect that it is a rare event indeed for a P to view a house for sale on WB let, alone buy one. The number of new P households set up on WB in the past 5 years in owner-occupied houses is unlikely to exceed double figures. It is of interest to note that some Clergymen of WB Churches have themselves moved house to EB recently. It is understood that of about 200 new WB houses built within the past 2 years possibly 2 have been bought by P.
- 10. In the public housing sector there are only 3 areas where there is a substantial P element, namely, Cloughglass, Northland and Fountain. Of the two former, P are forming a decreasing proportion while in Fountain a large proportion of the tenants are elderly and suffer from occasional harrassment which could have the effect of causing them to seek accommodation elsewhere. In this connection see note of meeting Mr. Concannon/Mr. Ross and others held on 9 September 1975.

## Clubs

- 11. The sole and old established WB Cricket Club - City of Derry - closed in 1978 because of lack of support. The City (Social) Club closed some 5 years ago and the Northern Counties Club has been passing through difficult times. The YMCA Club was severely damaged and closed and Presbyterian Working Men's Institute was destroyed. Neither will be re-established on WB.

## Businesses/Professions

- 12. Because of bombing many WB businesses (mainly P) have relocated on EB and new ones have been opened. As well, professional people (e.g. solicitors, architects, estate agents) have transferred or opened offices on EB. The result has been to provide outlets for a wide range of goods and services which previously would have been available only on WB. Several WB businesses (including the largest store) have changed from P to RC hands itself a sign of the movement which has taken place. A good many new RC operated enterprises have sprung up on WB many of them in former shirt factories which have ceased to operate because of transfer or closure. All this has strengthened

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a tendency towards independence of two distinct entities divided by the River instead of the previous inter-dependence of "City and Waterside."

C CAUSES

1. The reasons for the movement of population are varied but most of them are not far to seek. Among them may be mentioned the following:-
  - (a) Political fears
  - (b) The general pattern of violence and destruction
  - (c) Specific acts of violence (especially murders) and intimidation
  - (d) A change of residence to EB by virtually all RUC personnel
  - (e) Transfer of place of work

Political fears

2. There is a vague feeling in many minds that the Foyle could be used to form a natural political boundary and that at some future time there might be a strong temptation on the part of a Government to regard the WB (which is geographically an enclave of Northern Ireland within Donegal) as an area which could be ceded (without much regret) to the Republic. Many P people who harbour such a feeling have moved from WB. Their views may seem strange and unreasonable but they exist and are strongly held by many.

General pattern of violence and destruction

3. By far the greater part of the violence and destruction in Londonderry has taken place on WB. In the early 1970's there was daily confrontation between hooligans and the Army. There was a pattern of violence and destruction on Saturdays during peak shopping hours and in consequence people were deterred from entering the City. While violence has eased there are often highly inflammatory speeches on Saturdays in the main shopping centre which have an intimidating effect on many people. Such things have led to substantial numbers deciding to move away to a more restful environment and not to come back even to shop. Very often this has meant somewhere away from Londonderry District, e.g. to Limavady, to Coleraine/Portrush/Portstewart, to Bangor.

Specific acts of violence

4. There have been several assassinations or serious personal attacks in "mixed" areas, e.g. of RUC, reserve policemen, UDR, prison warders, businessmen. The result has been a gradual exodus of remaining P. While there has not been a great deal of overt intimidation there has been some e.g. at Belmont close to the large and growing Shantallow development and what was once "mixed" with a small P majority is now almost wholly RC.

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## RUC Personnel

5. A very potent factor has been the change of residence of RUC personnel. Many married RUC men (c60 at one time) and their families lived at Belmont. Now not one remains. There was a hostel for unmarried RUC men on WB which was damaged and closed and new temporary accommodation has been provided on EB. Other individual RUC personnel have sold up and moved. Now although the RUC Headquarters are on WB it is believed that only 2 RUC men and their families are in residence on WB (One of these, to his credit, is the Chief Superintendent).
6. While the very real concern of RUC men for the safety of themselves and of their families is appreciated, the reaction of many P people is a very natural one. They reason that if the RUC "cannot protect themselves" then protection may not be capable of being afforded to greatly outnumbered P residents on WB in the event of a resurgence of violence.
7. The movement of RUC personnel may well have been one of the strongest factors in the whole complex situation coupled with the existence for a long time of "no go" areas. Note that the deputation received by Mr. Concannon on 9 September 1975 claimed that Belmont Estate (where the RUC lived) was 95% P in 1969 but was then only 7% P.

## Location or Transfer of place of work

8. The location of a person's place of work is very important in determining where he will live. It is not the only factor but it becomes more compelling in the Londonderry situation. Severe damage to public offices on WB dictated an EB location for many public employees and similarly with the private sector as mentioned already. Observation confirms the view that most P workers on EB prefer an EB residence or a house in Limavady or Coleraine District.
9. A similar trend is observed where shops or factories have relocated and the flow of such relocation is clearly West to East. The loss of jobs on WB (where is 60% + of the population) is serious and is touched upon later.

## D CONSEQUENCES AND POSSIBLE REMEDIES

1. The consequences of such a movement of population have wide ramifications and unhappy consequences. It is not difficult to imagine a WB which is almost entirely RC (and at present the primary school ratio RC/P is in excess of 20 : 1). RC priests - as well as most right thinking RC laymen - deplore such a prospect. To put it no higher the implications for public funds are serious if proper use cannot be made of educational or other facilities provided and maintained wholly or largely from such funds. Old and cherished traditions and associations are liable to disappear

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and a City which is alien to many present and former citizens is emerging. The deeper political implications are for study and action at another level but it is not difficult to visualize the acute problems which would face the RUC if there were to be a continuing exodus of persons who are sympathetic to the Police.

2. But can anything be done to reverse the flow of population? Can anything be done even to stem it?
3. Speaking quite bluntly from personal knowledge of and long residence in Londonderry I do not believe the flow can be reversed. Even though many people appear to regret having moved, they would find it very difficult to bring themselves to move back into what have become unfamiliar and unsympathetic surroundings. It is one thing knowing neighbours near whom they have lived for many years. It is something else again to move into surroundings where a person is conspicuously different from most others. In any event the disparity of numbers is now such as to make "return" pointless for most people.
4. Efforts should and must be made to make life tolerable and worthwhile for all residents of the WB and to make its environment and facilities attractive to all the people of Londonderry District and beyond. The theme should be that of inter-dependence and by the same token the EB should not be "terra incognita" to people from West of the Foyle. The River should be a link and not a barrier and of course this underlines the importance of the new Foyle Bridge.
5. People must be attracted back into the old City of Londonderry and in this connection the following schemes are of prime importance and should be expedited where possible:-
  - (a) Richmond Development - Shops and Offices
  - (b) Bridge Street Car Park
  - (c) Foyle Street Offices and Bus Station
  - (d) Foyle Street Central Library
  - (e) East Wall Theatre
6. Part of the thinking behind these schemes - and in particular the location of offices - is that when completed they will all provide services for the whole community but which can be availed of only in that location. Hence there will be greater cross river traffic. Additionally the extent of Government commitment will be very obvious and thus should serve to lay the spectre of the WB being abandoned to the Republic. In my view it is of prime importance that as many public officials as possible be located at Richmond and Foyle Street. This will involve the closure of many temporary office buildings and perhaps the transfer of staff from more permanent buildings. If largish staffs are located at or close to the City centre there will be very significant spin-off effects on shopping etc. and there may well be encouragement to take up WB residence particularly if Grammar Schools continue there.

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7. What else can be done for the City centre and the West Bank generally?
8. A continuation and perhaps widening of the "Face Lift" scheme is worthy of consideration as is a possible further "Inner City Aid" scheme and a scheme (of limited duration) to encourage the rebuilding of bombed sites. A means of bringing back into use residential accommodation over shops could be explored. The transfer to Londonderry of other Government Offices has been suggested by various Londonderry interests. A sub-regional museum might be built on the Foyle Street Offices/Bus Station site where there is room for such a building.
9. A crying need exists for more jobs on the WB. As already mentioned there has been a large scale closure of shirt factories with resultant loss of manufacturing jobs but accompanied by sometimes very undesirable conversions of all or part of such factories for retail operations. What is probably the finest factory building in the City (Welch Margetsons of Carlisle Road) will be closing in just over a year's time. The Company is building a new factory on EB to which the jobs will be transferred. Many of the employees are resident close to Carlisle Road and will find the new location not nearly so convenient. Hence a possible further movement of population. It would be a pity if some means could not be found of retaining the Carlisle Road factory for industry. Department of Commerce purchase?
10. The Londonderry Gaslight Company, a P owned enterprise located in the Bogside is facing fateful decisions this year which could have wide and serious implications for a number of Departments. I should like to discuss these problems in some detail as a matter of urgency but my preliminary view is that a means ought to be found of ensuring the continuation of the operations of that Company.
11. Some of the Gas Company's land ought to be purchased to provide space for an industrial estate in the Bogside area.
12. The problems of WB education require special attention in the light of the very small P primary school population but also in the light of stresses in RC school policy. Greater mobility of pupils may be one answer especially in view of the availability of space in the Model Primary School and pressures in Waterside Schools.
13. Foyle and Londonderry College and Templemore I.S. may well face a very bleak future if Comprehensive education is to come about. RC secondary schools are facing problems of a different kind and there is a good deal of current unrest among parents who are reluctant to send their children to schools in Creggan.
14. All in all very large educational investments are at risk.

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15. Underlying everything is the security situation. If people feel they are not safe where they live they will move to more congenial surroundings. A Police presence is essential in WB locations other than Strand Road Headquarters and within Fort George. I believe there should be a Police Station at Shantallow where there exists a suitable site and I consider that notice of application for outline planning permission ought to be given. Other appropriate Policing measures ought to be taken and a start could well be made in the sphere of better enforcement of traffic regulations, detection of untaxed vehicles and the like. In my view many of these tasks could be carried out by traffic wardens whose numbers should be augmented (possibly by transfer of civilian searchers following training) What has to be demonstrated is that even handed justice is being meted out and that if regulations exist they will be enforced impartially.

E CONCLUSION

This paper may form the basis for discussion in appropriate quarters in which I should be happy to join and expand, if desired, any of the points brought out.



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