



# WORKERS PARTY

*socialist, secular, anti-sectarian*

## **Response to the consultation paper: ADDRESSING THE LEGACY OF NORTHERN IRELAND'S PAST**

The Workers Party acknowledges the hurt, distress and on-going suffering of many victims' families, friends and loved ones. We are also acutely aware of the significant and on-going mental pressures and disadvantage endured by many Trouble's survivors.

We therefore endorse approaches which place the needs of victims and survivors at the core of this process and are balanced, proportionate, transparent, fair and equitable.

It is against this backdrop that we welcome the Secretary of State's '**Addressing the Legacy of Northern Ireland's Past**' consultation paper and the opportunity to comment on it.

The Workers Party welcomes broadly the recommendations on dealing with the past as set out in the Stormont House Agreement in December 2014.

Specifically, we endorse an approach which rapidly facilitates the conclusion of all outstanding Trouble's inquests and outstanding investigations.

It is imperative that these processes are immediately and adequately funded and that, in the absence of a functioning Executive at Stormont, the UK government assumes responsibility for their implementation.

We support the proposal for the introduction of a pension for people severely injured as a result of the Troubles and argue that it should cover physical and enduring mental health problems where injury restricted or negated a full working life. These arrangements should be implemented promptly via the most appropriate channel.

Rehabilitation and support services should be available to all those who require them but who do not qualify for a pension.

A regional **Mental Trauma Service** should be available to support all those whose mental health has been impacted by the Troubles. It should be fully resourced and benchmarked against international best practice.

We broadly support the setting up and implementation of a **Historical Inquiry Unit** and for its remit to include Troubles-related deaths which occurred in Northern Ireland in the period between 11 April 1998 and 31 March 2004.

We support the establishment of an **Independent Commission on Information Retrieval** and the prompt enablement of the legislation in both jurisdictions to establish its legal standing. We believe that an ICIR could provide important insights for many individuals and families and, in some cases, that it may provide a degree of closure.

We would argue that its remit should be extended to include Troubles-related deaths which occurred in Northern Ireland in the period between 11 April 1998 and 31 March 2004. This would dovetail the ICIR with the Historical Inquiries Unit.

The creation of an **Oral History Archive** receives our support on the basis that it has the capacity to provide, albeit an informal, public record of individual's recollections and understanding of the Troubles and of specific and personal incidents.

The OHA has the potential to provide a future historical resource which is not currently available through any other channel. It should, as recommended in the Stormont House Agreement, be administered by the Public Records Office

The proposal for an **Implementation and Reconciliation Group** has the potential to contribute greatly to the way we address and learn from the past. It will be important to support a mechanism such as this particularly with regard to the formal learning and the academic reporting.

However, it is fundamentally imperative that reconciliation initiatives undertaken by this group are not free standing and that they take cognisance of the underlying and continuing social structures such as segregated education, segregated housing developments and institutionalised sectarianism and address reconciliation in the round.

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