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PAUL GRAY

GENERAL REVALUATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

Peter Brooke's letter of 30 March. *with PG*

He proposes an early announcement of a rating revaluation starting with non-domestic rates with a domestic revaluation starting in about 1992. This is presented as a consequence of the decision not to introduce the community charge in Northern Ireland. A main reason for this was that main 'local' services such as education were already in central Government hands.

I have no special knowledge about this, but instinct strongly suggests that this is not the time to be making this announcement. This applies particularly to domestic revaluation. The fact that the community charge has not been introduced in the Province has been a subject of some political comment, and an announcement now would simply provoke the debate anew, leading to a no doubt unhelpful comparison between rates and the community charge.

Peter Brooke argues that a revaluation is urgent. It is not said why this was not reflected in an announcement, say, two years ago when the decision not to introduce the community charge was made known. It cannot be so urgent that it can't wait a bit longer, at least until the community charge debate in England settles down. Anything else could just prove embarrassing to the Government.

Recommendation

- Delay any announcement of a Northern Ireland revaluation at least until the current furore over the community charge has died down.

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- If the case for urgency can be sustained, announce only the non-domestic revaluation. This could then be presented as simply mirroring the GB situation.

*John Mills*

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