

**MINISTER'S MEETING WITH FE PRINCIPALS, BIFHE, BRUNSWICK STREET –
26 FEBRUARY 2002 AT 10.00 AM**

PRESENT:	<u>DE</u>	<u>DEL</u>	<u>FE</u>
	Minister	Deirdre McGill	Professor Patrick Murphy
	Dr Browne	Norma Sinclair	Raymond Mullan
	Mr Ashe		Tom Place
	C McParland		Ian Huston
			Ann Heaslett

1. Mr P Murphy thanked the Minister for coming to the meeting. The Minister thanked the group for the opportunity to hear their views on the consultation. Reassured the group that this is a “real” consultation. Important that the Department engages with as many groups as possible.
2. Mr Murphy. We recognise that the present system requires change primarily because it is socially divisive. We do, however, feel that “Burns” did not give the FE sector a fair hearing. We are keen to support your views in terms of reform.
3. R Mullan. Main provider in the 16+ sector. Main vocational provider. A large part of our population are “2nd chance” students. We work very closely with industry. There is a need for strong links with schools especially in the 14-16 age group. At 16 we need to be able to make a distinctive and different contribution. Being lumped together in a collegiate does away with choice for the child. We can provide a very good choice for children, we are not the poor relation.
4. Tom Place. Lack of parity of esteem is the main issue here. German model is an example of the lack of stigma related to the alternative routes to the academic one.
 - i. Seminars difficulties with literacy and numeracy exacerbate the situation for kids in post primary education.
 - ii. Too many people being pushed into the academic route. The vocational route needs highflyers too.
 - iii. Careers advice. No coherence. The curriculum as it stands creates competition between FE colleges and the mainstream schools.

5. Ian Huston. We possess the links with industry. We are best placed to offer the vocational training. Careers advice tends to steer students away from vocational route. We need parity of funding. We feel that we are being asked to educate the children for a lower return.
6. Ann Heaslett. There are existing examples of partnerships between FE colleges and post primary schools. These models may provide some answers to the gaps and lack of consultation with FE in the “Burns” report. We need to avoid duplication.
7. Tom Place. One of the problems that we faced in recent years was the old department’s decision to allow schools to teach advanced GNVQs in competition with ourselves. P Murphy. We need to have a clear idea of where we stand. There is a need for a clear strategic plan. No one seems to be tackling the social divisions that exist.
8. Tom Place. While we have to compete with schools for the same kids with the same curriculum the collegiate system cannot work. We need to compliment each other.
9. Minister. How do the consenses currently offered fit in with the world of work?

P Murphy – 3 levels of courses

1. Community courses.
2. Further Education 16-19 Determined by Industry.
10. Tom Place TEA cap the numbers of vocational places we offer in line with determined need in the workplace.
11. R Mullan. Newry could be described as an academic factory. Four grammar schools etc but the FE college forwards more students to higher education than all of them put together.
12. All – We have spent a long time building expertise in course development with industry including the aspects of job shadowing and development for our staff. We need to sustain and develop that.
13. Deirdre McGill, DEL. This is an initial response, there will be an indepth response.

14. Tom Place. As a sector we are glad that you are considering the FE position in all of this further. P Murphy. We felt somewhat excluded by Burns but now feel included by your interest.