Cancer deaths are slashed

Charity gives warning for millennium

By **Nevin Farrell**

FEWER people in Northern Ireland died of cancer last year than any year in the last decade, the Cancer Research Campaign has reported.

Better treatments, detection and screening, as well as a greater awareness of cancer prevention messages, have slashed the number of deaths in the north and the UK in general by 5,000 deaths a year since the early 1990s.

But another cancer charity, Action Cancer, yesterday issued a frightening message, saying that the disease is set to become the biggest killer in the British Isles early in the next Millenium.

Experts from the Cancer Research Campaign – the UK's leading cancer charity – analysed the figures from 1987-1996 to find that although it is too soon to say we've turned the corner, this is certainly a move in the right direction.

"Although it is too early to predict a consistent trend, these figures are very encouraging and show a new low for cancer mortality in Northern Ireland over the last ten years," said Jean Walsh, Northern Ireland Cancer Research Campaign official.

Ms Walsh said: "We believe that a greater understanding of cancer is the reason for this success story. And this news is even more heartening once you take into account the fact that more people are developing cancer each year – because of the increasing elderly population."

But the executive director of Action Cancer in Northern Ireland, Peter Quigley, said: "Cancer is set to become the biggest killer in these islands early in the next Millennium. It now affects one in three people.

"Cancer can have a devastating effect on families and sometimes there is a reluctance to seek help until it is too late. The good news is that most cancers can be successfully treated if detected in time.

"All of us have a responsibility to ensure that those who are most at risk avail themselves of the excellent screening opportunities which are available in Northern Ireland," added Mr Quigley.

Last year throughout the UK, 153,000 people died from cancer compared to around 158,000 in the early 1990s.

Researchers say a fall in the number of deaths from lung cancer in men and breast cancer in women account for about two thirds of the drop.

Improvements in the survival of children and young adults with cancer as well as in cervical and stomach cancer add to the good news.

However, death rates in certain types of the disease remain a cause for concern. These include skin cancer and prostate cancer.

Ms Walsh added: "What better message to herald in the new year than news that cancer deaths are on the decline?

"But we are not complacent and are as resolute as ever to bring about a turn around in all cancers. I am even more convinced that research is the answer. Our work is making a real difference and helping today's research become tomorrow's cures."

Ms Walsh said men seemed to be smoking less but that women in the north seemed to be smoking more.

Despite the news that overall cancer deaths were down, she feared the north could be facing an "epidemic" in skin cancer.

She said people weren't heeding advice and wrongly believed that the sun in Northern Ireland was too weak to cause skin cancer.

Ms Walsh said one of the reasons for a rise in skin cancer could be connected with people being burned when package holidays abroad first started in the 60s and the results were now coming to light.

The Cancer Research Campaign received £1½ million in Northern Ireland last year to pay for cancer research and Ms Walsh pointed out that no funding was available from the government. Action Cancer is also unfunded and must raise £1.2 million.

Plea for help in catching raiders

By **Seamus McKinney**
Derry Correspondent

A DERRY politician has appealed to anyone with information about a gang believed to be behind six so-called ram raids in as many weeks to come forward.

The latest incident occurred early yesterday morning when a stolen Vauxhaull Nova car was driven into the Baltimore Bar in the Collon Lane area of Derry.

Police gave chase to the car as it sped away but the vehicle was abandoned in the Galliagh area of the city and a number of men were seen running away. A small quantity of drink was recovered.

The incident was the second ram-raid in Derry in the last week. Early on St Stephen's day a car was used to ram into a Costcutters Store at Culmore on the outskirts of the city.

In the last six weeks, six bars and shops in the greater Shantallow area of Derry, including a shop at Muff just across the Donegal border, have been ram-raided.

Derry SDLP councillor Shaun Gallagher said the raids were most likely being carried out by the same gang.

Nationalist 'alert' after kidnap bid

POLICE have issued a description of one of two men who attempted to abduct a Derry youth near the city centre.

The 15-year-old was walking at Foyle Road on Tuesday night when two men in a dark blue coloured hatchback car approached him and asked for directions to Altnagelvin hospital.

One of the men, who spoke with country accents, asked the teenager to show them the way to the hospital. When the 15-year-old refused, the passenger attempted to force him into the vehicle but the youth managed to escape.

Sinn Fein chairman Mitchel McLaughlin warned nationalists to be wary of strangers and strange cars in their areas in the aftermath of Saturday's murder of LVF leader, Billy Wright. An RUC spokesman said the passenger in the car was six feet tall and in his mid 20s.

Forebodings of 30 years of turmoil

THE year 1967 marked "the lull before the storm" in Northern Ireland politics. The year opened with the renewal of pressure from British Prime Minister Harold Wilson on the Stormont government to accelerate the process of political reform.

At a major conference between Wilson, his Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, and Captain O'Neill, Brian Faulkner and William Craig, the hardline Home Affairs Minister, at 10 Downing Street on January 12 1967, the British prime minister warned the northern authorities bluntly that Labour backbenchers were becoming increasingly restive about certain aspects of Northern Ireland affairs.

Wilson was especially exercised about the absence of "one man, one vote" in northern local elections and the obstructive role of Ulster Unionist MPs at Westminster.

"It was impossible to stand pat on what had been settled in the past," Wilson impressed on a shaken O'Neill.

Within Northern Ireland, O'Neill's reforming intentions faced the relentless opposition of his own right wing, represented in cabinet by Faulkner, Craig and West, while outside Ian Paisley, duly ennobled by a three-month prison sentence, commanded increasing Protestant working class support against the prime minister's perceived "betrayal of Ulster's heritage".

On the nationalist side, the painfully slow pace of change left the minority angry and frustrated. The decision to deny Derry the north's second university fanned this sense of injustice to a white heat.

The "11-plus generation", products of the 1947 Stormont Education Act – like the young Derry schoolmaster John Hume – was not prepared to settle for the second class citizenship reserved for its forefathers.

In February 1967 the Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association (NICRA) was formed. In March 1967 the Minister of Home Affairs, William Craig banned the Republican Clubs, provoking the first student protest march in Belfast.

At Westminster the charismatic Republican Labour MP for West Belfast Gerry Fitt had mobilised strong sympathy among a vocal group of Labour MPs in the Campaign for Democracy in Ulster under Paul Rose. The success of Fitt and his allies in challenging the speaker's convention that Northern Ireland matters could not be raised at Westminster alarmed unionism as the year progressed.

The year witnessed a serious, though premature, attempt to bring the Catholic Mater Hospital into the Northern Ireland Health Service, while an Education Amendment Act prefigured increased grants for voluntary (mainly Catholic) schools.

1967 ended with a surprise visit by the new Taoiseach Jack Lynch to Stormont for Christmas dinner and discussions with O'Neill. Unlike in 1965, O'Neill had taken care to apprise his cabinet in advance. But the snowballs which Ian Paisley rained down on Lynch's departing car were an ominous sign of trouble ahead for the north.

BRIAN FAULKNER... he felt as commerce minister that if Common Market membership were to lead to an overall increase in national economic activity, Northern Ireland would certainly benefit

Unionist EEC fears revealed in '67 files

Reports by
Dr Eamon Phoenix

UNIONIST concerns at the implications of joint United Kingdom and Irish membership of the EEC are revealed in confidential cabinet files released today in Belfast.

At a Cabinet meeting on June 8 1967, Minister of Commerce Brian Faulkner felt that if Common Market membership were to lead to an overall increase in national economic activity, Northern Ireland would certainly benefit.

But the Minister of Health and Social Services William Morgan said that serious difficulties would arise if both the UK and the Republic were to be admitted to the European Community.

In particular, there were doubts whether the system of permits operating under the north's Safeguarding of Employment Act (1947) – designed to restrict southern migration to the north – could be continued in its present form. The UK departments were well aware of this problem and it was hoped that some solution could be found, bearing in mind that some EEC countries had areas of high unemployment. At present, however, there were not many people from the south attempting to secure employment in the north.

In further discussion, fears were expressed that an ending of the permit system would lead to a considerable increase in the flow of labour into Northern Ireland with serious implications in such places as Derry.

Minister of Development William Fitzsimmons said that considerable numbers of 'self-employed' appeared to be working in building trades in that city, while the Attorney-General, EW Jones, noted that the health service facilities in Northern Ireland were an obvious attraction.

For his part, William Craig, the minister of Home Affairs, observed that most European countries seemed to restrict the franchise to their own nationals and this was an aspect which ought to be considered at a later stage.

The Attorney-General raised the constitutional implications of the Treaty of Rome for Northern Ireland.

His predecessor had urged that Northern Ireland should take the opportunity of EEC entry to seek an extension of its legislative powers to deal with the 'transfer' aspects of EEC questions. Some of the obligations imposed by Common Market membership might be most unpopular in Northern Ireland and the serious situation would arise if the Stormont parliament refused to implement such obligations.

Prime Minister Captain O'Neill said he shared the attorney's fears. It had never been envisaged when Northern Ireland had been set up that it would have to deal with international matters of this kind, he remarked.

However, the ministers of Commerce, Home Affairs and Finance felt that the legislative powers of the Northern Ireland parliament should, if possible, be widened. It was agreed that Ministers should keep the entire question under review.

Union flag in schools

The question of flying the union flag on state schools in Northern Ireland was raised at a cabinet meeting in June 1967.

The Minister of Education, Captain William Long, referred to a motion before the Northern Ireland House of Commons from Unionist MP Nat Minford proposing that the union flag should be flown in all county schools.

The minister noted that it would be most difficult to insist that the flag must be flown on schools in strongly nationalist areas, possibly necessitating a police guard. He hoped very much, therefore, that this matter would not be pressed too far.

Split on jobs for Derry

At a Stormont Cabinet meeting on December 7 1967 the possibility of relocating a civil service department in Derry was raised.

The cabinet considered a memo by the Minister of Finance Herbert Kirk outlining the problems of accommodating a civil service workforce of 11,400. The minister proposed a range of options including transferring a department to the new city of Craigavon.

Such a move, he conceded, might "invite criticism from other towns, and particularly from Derry whose representatives had asked on more than one occasion for the transfer of a government department to their city".

At the cabinet meeting, Minister of Commerce Brian Faulkner said it would be difficult to defend a decision against dispersal of the civil service in view of the dispersal policies of both the London and Dublin governments. It would seem inconsistent for the government to advocate further development of Craigavon and Derry and yet refuse to give a lead.

The Attorney-General Mr Jones observed that, as far as Derry was concerned, there could be no turning back from the policy that further economic development of the city was to be encouraged. Even if it should not prove possible to move a large department to Derry, there could be no doubt that the transfer of a smaller branch would make a favourable impression.

For his part, the Minister of Finance pointed out that over the next five years £30 million of government money would be invested in Craigavon and there was a clear need to introduce non-manufacturing employment in the area.

Ministers agreed to the erection of a new government building at Stormont. However, they also agreed in principle that some dispersal of staff to places such as Derry and Craigavon would be desirable where practicable.

'Ulster' favoured

At a Cabinet meeting on June 22 1967, Prime Minister Captain Terence O'Neill informed his colleagues that, under an impending army re-organisation, the Royal Ulster Rifles, Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers and Royal Irish Fusiliers were to be amalgamated into a single entity. Both Captain O'Neill and the Attorney-General (EW Jones) had urged most strongly that the name of the new force must include the word 'Ulster'.

He had pointed out that the inclusion of this word was evidently no deterrent whatever to recruits from the south, in view of the continued success of the Royal Ulster Rifles in obtaining southern recruits.

Unfortunately, however, the prime minister told ministers that British army opinion, including that of the colonels, appeared to favour the use of the term 'Irish'.

Matters were now coming to a conclusion and he would propose, through the Home Office, to make it clear yet again that the word 'Ulster' should be used and that the use of 'Irish' would be very badly received in Northern Ireland.

The prime minister was strongly supported by other ministers while the Minister of Education (Captain Long) felt that some use might be made of the fact that the Earl of Ulster was at present Colonel-in-Chief of the Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers.

'No' to joint Customs

At a cabinet meeting on June 22 1967, the prime minister sought the views of the Stormont cabinet on a suggestion from the Home Office in London that there might be joint Customs control on the land boundary between north and south. Captain O'Neill's own view was that such a proposal must be resisted.

The headquarters of HM Customs and Excise, being in London, would be in a poor position to control possible abuses of joint facilities. In any case, joint control could be seen as a step towards wider integration of a kind which would be politically unacceptable.

Ministers generally expressed themselves as strongly opposed to such a suggestion on political grounds. The Minister of State doubted whether HM Customs offices would have statutory authority to operate on the Republic's territory and certainly the police had no such authority.

It was agreed that the Home Office should be told at once that such a suggestion would be completely unacceptable on political grounds.

Cabinet of high-profile unionists

THE Northern Ireland cabinet of 1967 was headed by Captain Terence O'Neill and included several figures destined for prominence in Unionist politics in the 1960s and 70s.

These included Mr Brian Faulkner (minister of commerce), Mr William Craig (minister of home affairs), Mr Harry West (minister of agriculture), Captain William Long (minister of education), Mr William Morgan (minister of health and social services), Mr WK Fitzsimmons (minister for development) and Mr EW Jones, QC (Attorney-General).

O'Neill's cousin, Major James Chichester-Clarke (a future prime minister and now Lord Moyola) succeeded Mr West at agriculture in April 1967.

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