

“UNGENEROUS THOUGH NOT MEAN”: THE SCHEME FOR THE PURCHASE OF EVACUATED DWELLINGS, BELFAST, NORTHERN IRELAND

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In early May 1972, a Catholic fruit vendor on the Shankill Road was confronted by a crowd of protestors. Unable to enter the street, he could not sell his fresh produce. His plea for monetary compensation, made a few days later on Northern Ireland's *It's Your Line* radio programme, led to an unanticipated, although not unprecedented outcome. The government of Great Britain, supported by international efforts, devised an assemblage of financial schemes to compensate individuals for property loss in the hope of ending a climate of unravelling civility, including sectarian threats, intimidation and violence.¹ Government schemes were intended to provide limited financial compensation to individuals during a difficult, conflictual period.² This scheme would eventually be applied to the circumstances of the fruit vendor, in the form of a one-time *ex gratia* payment. Initially, the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)* was a British government-funded programme, administered in Britain and Northern Ireland, for the purpose of providing, on evidence of proof, limited financial compensation to home owners and residents who lost their houses due to conflict.

The Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)

In 1973, a Working Party of Representatives of Agencies, convened by the Minister of State, Home Office, was struck to deal with issues of financial compensation along the lines requested by the fruit vendor.³ Convened when intimidation levels were relatively low, the Working Party unveiled *SPED* as a temporary policy response. *SPED*

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- 1 After March 1972, and apart from the Sunningdale period in 1974, Northern Ireland was ruled directly by the British Secretary of State. In Northern Ireland, intimidation is contrary to s1 of *The Protection against the Persons and Property Act (Northern Ireland), 1969*.
 - 2 Separate schemes were devised to compensate individuals for the loss of farms, land and livestock, businesses and employment, and housing. In this analysis, I undertake a close examination of the development, administration, and operation of the *Scheme for the Purchase of Evacuated Dwellings (SPED)*.
 - 3 The Minister of State for Northern Ireland was Lord Windlesham. Working Party members included: Minister of Community Relations; Down County Welfare; Royal Ulster Constabulary; (British) Army Representative; Belfast Council of Social Welfare; Coordinating Centre for Relief; Northern Ireland Housing Executive; Antrim County Welfare; Belfast Corporation Welfare; Ministry of Health and Social Services; and Community Relations Commission (CREL, *Working Party on Intimidation*).

drew on existing legislation to establish an applicant-based scheme for monetary compensation, including a system of appeal.⁴

SPED had tight eligibility criteria, a dense bureaucratic process, and provided low levels of financial compensation.⁵ Under *SPED*, financial compensation was only available to owners or occupiers of residential dwellings who experienced property loss. Businesses were exempt from *SPED* eligibility. Applicants must have vacated their houses at least six months prior to their application, and their houses had to be classed as unsaleable. For instance, in the case of Application No. 1911, the house was purchased by the owners for £1,000 in 1955. It was vacated in 1973 and classed an unsaleable because “the bar next door is a target for gunmen” (DED). Attacked on four separate occasions, bullets had struck the house.⁶ The application process for *SPED* was onerous. Applications had to be made through solicitors, and necessitated an extensive knowledge of the property, a Certificate of Verification of Intimidation from the Chief Constable, Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) or British security forces, and confirmation of inclusion on the Emergency Housing List (DED *SPED*). Successful awards were made at levels significantly below the property values. Under *SPED*, a maximum purchase price, by the Northern Ireland House Executive, of £5,000 was payable to the head of household. In cases of house purchases, the

4 Relevant legislation included: The Conspiracy and Protection of Property Act, 1875; the Criminal Injuries to Persons Act (Compensation) (c.9, N.I.) 1956; the Criminal Injuries Act to Property (Compensation) Act (Northern Ireland) 1973; the Protection of the Persons and Property Act (Northern Ireland) 1969, (amended under the Northern Ireland (Modification of Enactments No. 1) Order 1973, and the Northern Ireland (Modifications of Enactments- N.I.) Order 1973.

5 Historically, financial compensation was sought by Southern Loyalists who moved North of the border after partition, Southern Loyalists who relocated to Great Britain, and Catholics from the North who moved to the Free State and to Great Britain, many of whom alleged personal injury in various forms and/property loss. A range of compensatory schemes acknowledged losses resulting from “violence targeted deliberately at particular groups, identified by their religion, political allegiance, economic status and gender” during the 1916 Rising and the Irish War of Independence (Clark 197). Individuals were compensated financially under *The Criminal Injuries Act* 1919, 1920, and the Shaw Commission, (also the Compensation (Ireland) Commission 1922) established jointly by the United Kingdom and the Irish Free State governments (Clark 20, 23). Brennan exposes financial compensation provided to individuals, (Protestant and Catholic), by the British-based Irish Grants Committee (I.G.C.), 1922-1931 as a “political minefield.” Despite political accusations about blame, the I.G.C. was careful to maintain diplomatic relations with Northern Ireland’s Prime Minister, James Craig, and the Free State Government. The I.G.C. shared many features with what was later to be *SPED*: it was established as a temporary programme; it accepted applications from members of all communities; it provided limited financial compensation for losses; its administrators were similarly worried about fraudulent claims; eligibility required extensive documentation (i.e. medical certificates, banks and account books, valuations); its claimants formed their own association to protest low valuations; and, it included the establishment of a Special Hardships Committee, which “paved the way for the provision of *ex gratia* payments” (Brennan 416).

6 Special Hardship Cases referred to the Minister, DED.

Northern Ireland Housing Executive could refurbish and re-sell houses, although inter-government correspondence specified that “incidental improvements should be minimal and should be geared to the general level of housing in the area” (*Rehabilitation Working Party*). It may have been assumed that applicants receiving low levels of financial compensation would be enticed to move from conflict-ridden Belfast, to outlying towns with lower housing costs. Additional funds, as small resettlement grants, were made available for relocation from Belfast to Antrim, Bangor, Carrickfergus, Craigavon, and Newtownards (CREL Intimidation).

Administering SPED

SPED’s operation was, at best, uneven. Some Catholic residents were hesitant to contact the RUC or British security forces to obtain the required Certificate of Verification of Intimidation, especially after the introduction of the policy of internment on 9 August 1971. This tension was unacknowledged in advice provided by the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (NICRC) to threatened and intimidated residents.⁷ The NICRC’s official position was that intimidated residents should visit their local police station in person, ensure their complaint was registered by the desk sergeant, and request police protection to secure their personal possessions.⁸ This advice was directly contradicted by the Association for Legal Justice, which advised intimidated Catholic residents to inform the Coordination Relief Centre on the Falls Road, West Belfast, to register the incident with the Association for Legal Justice, and to consider returning to their house because, they contended, “there is no [financial] compensation for what you might lose.”⁹

Mutual distrust characterised relations between some SPED administrators and applicants. Applicants’ eligibility was questioned, with some officials suggesting that SPED created “an atmosphere or even a mental impression of intimidation” (FIN, *Compensation for Losses Due to Intimidation* 12) where none existed, and that “such a programme would encourage people to leave their homes” (FIN, *Compensation for Losses Due to Intimidation* 16). In a letter to the Director, Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission, Chief Constable, [Edward] Graham Shillington of the RUC questioned the veracity of some applicants:¹⁰

I think it must be accepted that many of those who complained of intimidation did so in the knowledge that their allegations of threats were difficult to refute and that many grants under such circumstances could be easily obtained. (CREL, *Intimidation* 1)

7 The Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission existed from 1969 until 1975; the current Community Relations Council was established in 1990.

8 See, *Intimidation: What to Do and Where to Go*.

9 The Association for Legal Justice monitored justice and security issues and the treatment of Catholics (Thompson 82).

10 (Edward) Graham Shillington was Chief Constable, RUC from 1970 until 1973.

RUC Officer, Bruce Davison, stationed at the Mountpottinger Road Barracks in East Belfast also questioned the presence of intimidation. Asked by the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide his first-hand impressions of an area reputed to be a conflict-ridden interface, he responded,

There is much more talk of intimidation than there is actual intimidation. Many people feel intimidated by the general situation. And often take advantage of the provisions by the public authorities to move to areas where they feel among their own. Others also react...to specific events, [which] at other times would only be classified as normal Saturday night rowdiness...at present, about half a dozen cases are known, but it is doubtful that these are much more than bad-neighbour relationships.” (CREL, *Civil Disturbances* 1)

The formation of the Association of Former Owners/Occupiers, whose members demanded a change in housing valuation rates used by *SPED* indicated collective dissatisfaction with the levels of financial compensation awarded.

An examination of appeal cases provides further evidence of *SPED*'s inconsistent application. Appeals were referred to the Independent Advisory Committee for Special Hardships Cases for decisions. However, exceptions were made often. Exceptions related to compassionate grounds, including: vulnerability determined by age; medical condition, including nerves; handicap; mixed marriage; the presence of young children; and/or, conflict-related injuries. For example, Applicant No. 2074 was made by a 62-year-old, Protestant woman who reported no incidents of intimidation and resided in her house at the time of application. She received compensation under *SPED* based on the fact that “although she is of the same religious beliefs as her neighbours, she does not share their political sympathies” (ENV, *Special Hardship Cases* 1).

Official correspondence about *SPED* illustrates inter-jurisdictional cooperation in the administration of an intentionally restrictive compensatory scheme.¹¹ *SPED* provided

11 Government documents are historical artefacts and contemporary building blocks in official narratives about the conflict. They reinforce the legitimacy and power of governments to secure particular versions of the conflict (Burton 66). John Coakley and Jennifer Todd remind researchers that archival documents “tell us what officials choose to minute, and what élites choose to circulate in writing” (8). Among the documents examined between January and June 2015 were 53 archival files in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI). These included: government reports; policy documents; recorded discussion of legislation; minutes of working committees; inter-departmental committee reports; secretary's reports; records for compensatory programmes, schemes and hardship cases; compensatory tribunal records and appeals; inter-governmental communiqués, communication with security forces and peace groups; housing organisation records; emergency housing lists; personal correspondence; open access criminal reports and criminal injury reports; print leaflets with guidelines for intimidated families; scholarly reports; press releases; and, intentionally assembled collections of press clippings. The form of these documents normalises their content (Partner 162), although David Miller argues that official documents are not uniform in their thoughts, agendas, and responses (386, 387). Spread across various government departments, agencies, and bodies, accounts of housing displacement and govern-

limited financial compensation for property loss, but it undervalued individual and/or household need. In the words of one official, “an argument in favour of avoiding generosity is that it is an additional test of genuineness” – *SPED* was devised to be “ungenerous, though not mean” (FIN, *Letter 1*). Necessity and opportunism were also integral aspects of the scheme’s operation. *SPED* became a tool to avert a population exodus from Northern Ireland to England, to bolster state efforts for securitisation by re-establishing patterns of community-specific, residential segregation in Belfast, and to facilitate urban regeneration. Consequently, *SPED* also facilitated the illegal practice of squatting, temporarily taking up residence, and paramilitary vigilantism, both of which were antithetical to state efforts to ensure public safety, and promote conflict alleviation.¹²

Housing Displacement, Charitable Relief, and Financial Compensation: Belfast, The 1970s

The British government was caught off guard by the escalation of conflict. Initially, short-term, non-monetary assistance was provided to affected households charitably as a temporary form of relief. For instance, displaced residents used volunteer removal services to leave their houses and neighbourhoods. One particular furniture service was staffed by volunteers and operated, from the late 1960s until the mid-1970s, as a removal service and source of second-hand furniture (Voluntary Service Bureau 28). By 1974, the service’s two vans had travelled in excess of 3,000 miles per month transferring household possessions, mostly among Belfast’s residentially segregated neighbourhoods (Voluntary Service Bureau 28). Two organizations, the Belfast Charity Organization Society and the Citizens Advice Bureau were also staffed mainly by volunteer labourers. Displaced residents who appealed to charitable bodies for non-monetary assistance could expect to have to travel, including into the city centre which was often a dangerous location (HSS, *Removal 1*). John Darby and Geoffrey Morris, in a report about intimidated households, noted “some families have visited 8 or 10 offices without relief” (108). The Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC) and the British Army were identified by Darby and Morris as delaying and/or refusing assistance to some households. In their 1974 report, Darby and Morris claimed that charitable efforts operated on “shoestring budgets” (108), staff in emergency centres

ment responses in Northern Ireland are fragmented. Official documents are often typed by staff whose initials render the gendered politics of employment invisible. Classification codes convey restrictions, and the exchange of documents among individuals and departments and inconsistencies in address to individuals, in webs of correspondence, limit their transparency. The coherence and accessibility of documents are also limited due to draft copies, corrections, redaction, embargoes, and censorship. For example, parts of the fruit vendor’s file are embargoed until 2081.

- 12 To date, there is no comprehensive examination of loyalist and paramilitary involvement in housing issues in Northern Ireland. In the past, and present, paramilitary organizations instigate housing displacement and offer protection from it.

were poorly trained, assistance was compartmentalized, and cooperation amongst agencies existed on paper only.

Needs for financial assistance and long term housing were intended to be met through Belfast Housing Aid, which operated an Emergency Housing Purchase Scheme with only one full-time manager and “necessary ancillary staff” and through *SPED* (DED, *Brief History 4*).¹³ The government’s view that financial compensation should be made available, and that the Shankill Road fruit vendor’s loss should be compensated by *SPED*, despite his circumstances being outside of the scheme’s guidelines, were expressed in a letter from E. Barry, Minister of Home Affairs Northern Ireland to C. Darling, Minister of Finance:

[The] Secretary of State is keen on giving [*name redacted*] some assistance to alleviate his loss, even if it involves an *ex gratia* payment, as indeed it most probably would. This could mean treating this case as one of exceptional hardship which is not covered in any existing compensatory scheme. The exceptional grounds is [*sic*] the goods for which the compensation is sought are perishables and their loss arose because [*name redacted*] was denied access to his premises. (FIN, *Joint Memo 1*)

This assertion solidified the ability of *SPED* programme administrators to operate with considerable discretion, and may have foreshadowed the British government’s inability to curtail the conflict through other means, including military intervention.

Threats, intimidation, and violence encompassed a range of behaviours including anonymous telephone calls, threats scrawled on gates and gable walls, the receipt of bullets (and for Catholics Mass cards) in the mail, broken windows, and arson and/or physical attacks (Darby 86). Knowledge that those who resided nearby had received threats heightened distrust and instigated relocation (Darby 88). Population relocation resulting from displacement could involve the eviction of a minority group, the territorial expansion of another group, and/ or the evacuation of all residents (Black, Pinter, and Overy). Housing displacement acquired its poignancy because housing and politics were closely related issues. Housing quality was poor, particularly in Belfast. Housing availability was limited and there was a long-standing practice of inequality in post-World War II housing allocation between Protestant and Catholic communities.¹⁴

Government officials acknowledged that conflict-instigated property losses were substantial, although there is no reliable figure to indicate the total number of affected

13 Belfast Housing Aid was established to encourage home ownership. When high unemployment rates, low wages, and difficult financing made this work untenable, it shifted its services to providing loans. The receipt of loans was subject to approval by the joint decisions of an estate agent, solicitor, and member of the agency’s Management Committee (DED, *Belfast Housing Aid 1*).

14 In Belfast, Catholics were underserved, receiving only 17% of all allocated corporation houses in 1961 (Connolly 287). In Dungannon, Co. Tyrone, there was a twenty-year period during which no public housing was allocated to Catholic families. John Whyte argues that complaints about housing allocation rose with the availability of public housing.

households (Side 490).¹⁵ The Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission (NICRC) estimates that in summer 1969, 8.8% of all Catholic households, and 5.3% of all Protestant households were vacated because of perceived or actual threats, intimidation, and/or violence (Darby 58). By February 1973, this number rose to 11.8% and 6.6% respectively, with between 8,000 and 15,000 households affected (Darby 58). Bombay Street, in West Belfast is an often-cited example of displacement. In August 1969, sectarian attacks by loyalist groups, referred to by some Catholic residents as “Paisleyite mobs” (Brady 2) and “Orange mobs from the Shankill Road” (Brady 3), rendered forty-four of sixty-five houses uninhabitable. Bombay Street resident, John Cullen was reportedly burnt out of his house on nearby Cupar Street three times: once in 1920, again in 1921, and again in 1969.¹⁶ From 1969 onward, the intensity of threats, intimidation, and violence in Belfast peaked and waned. Although protection was offered to households by paramilitary organisations, this assistance was often unwelcome because it could instigate further conflict (Darby 107; Voluntary Service Bureau 61).

Consequences of SPED

SPED’s operation was intended to meet the long-term needs of displaced residents of Belfast, and it accommodated government plans. However, some house owners and occupiers, by virtue of their access to private finances, could bypass the scheme through emigration (Darby 89; Terchek 369). The British government regarded emigration unfavourably and its concerns were two-fold: it wanted to avert a mass migration of one community over another, resulting in further demographic and power imbalances; and, it wanted to minimize migrant resettlement costs for Britain. Inter-jurisdictional communiqués between officials at Westminster and in Northern Ireland state, “it is undesirable that assisted cases should become a welfare liability for Welfare Authorities in Great Britain” (HSS, Newell 1). They outline financial assistance for emigration as limited because, “no one wants to encourage an exodus to G.B. [Great Britain] and G.B. doesn’t want that either” (FIN, *Letter* 9). However, by 1972, net outward migration from Northern Ireland was already underway.¹⁷ The Central Secretariat estimated that 12,000 individuals in 1971, and another 12,000 in 1972, had emigrated as a result of the conflict and its related, poor economic situation (CENT 1).

Protestant community members tended to relocate to England, in a process referred to in a government document as “a creaming off of an area’s natural leaders” (CREL,

15 Government documents indicate scale by noting “hundreds of houses in the Springfield Park area [in West Belfast] have been vacated by their owners, and [which] are deteriorating through vandalism” (*SPED Scheme* 1).

16 Bombay Street was redesigned by architect Seán Mac Goil. Thirty-one of sixty-five houses that were destroyed were re-built with donations to the Bombay Street Housing Association, including £14,000 in donations received from the United States (n.d.).

17 See Johanne Devlin Trew, *Leaving the North* (2013).

Civil Disturbances 1). In a few cases, this relocation was state-assisted. A 1974 scheme provided transportation costs to households threatened because they offered assistance to security forces. The Northern Ireland Office notes, “this particular scheme is not widely known and we would not want it publicised” (NIO 1). Catholic community members tended to relocate to the Republic of Ireland. Between 1969 and 1972, “thousands of Northern Irish residents fled across the border” (Rahaleen 22) instigating a political and humanitarian crisis. In the Republic, Jack Lynch’s Fianna Fáil government established a civil relief system centred on non-monetary charitable provision, excluding housing allocation. ‘Northern refugees’ were accommodated temporarily in poorly equipped church properties, army barracks, airport hangers, and tents in counties Cork, Donegal, Kerry, Kildare, Kilkenny, Meath, Tipperary, Waterford, and Wicklow (Rahaleen 31; Cochrane 2014). Schoolchildren, members of religious orders, the Irish Countrywomen’s Association, (which established the Women’s Voluntary Emergency Service), the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Irish Red Cross, the Civil Defence, Gardaí, and the Army assisted the ‘refugees’ (Rahaleen 31). But, mis-handled government funds resulted in political resignations in the Republic, and many ‘refugees,’ who struggled in the absence of housing provision returned North, with governments tracking their returning numbers closely (Rahaleen 24, 31).

Segregated residential patterns did not originate with *SPED*, but their continuation proved insufficient to address existing policy deficits (Darby 206).¹⁸ Local habits, practices, and folklore solidified existing physical, spatial, and social boundaries, and inter-community tensions and pressing housing needs made *SPED* an easy target of criticism (Murtagh 835). Darby and Morris argue that housing segregation exacerbated a “polarisation of attitudes and a lack of positive contacts with other communities,” and hindered conflict alleviation efforts (4). *SPED* administrators accepted the fact that the scheme exacerbated community-segregated housing, “we regret that these schemes encourage further polarisation of the communities, but we feel that this is inevitable if the risk of confrontation is to be avoided” (ENV, *Housing Improvement in Belfast* 1). This arrangement, however, benefitted state and security forces’ efforts to try to manage the conflict. Some residents also accepted housing segregation as the price of security. For instance, Protestants acknowledged the limitations of resettling only other Protestant households in the Ardoyne area of North Belfast, but accepted this practice as the only viable option under the circumstances (*Belfast Newsletter* 2). Single-identity neighbourhoods were recognised as important sites of “ontological security, defence and cultural enhancement” (Murtagh 835). Resident surveys indicated strong preferences for re-housing within the city’s most segregated

18 Residential segregation persists today. Shuttleworth and Lloyd argue, “in 2001 we [NI] were living in a more residentially-segregated society than in 1971, but not markedly more segregated than in 1991” (223). Brendan Murtagh and Peter Shirlow argue that the post peace accord period has re-designed Belfast’s class-based “consumer landscape” but has not significantly altered the landscape of inter-community perceptions or interactions (10).

areas, largely regarded as “defensible” (Darby 91). *SPED* administrators’ willingness to meet residents’ demands enhanced perceptions about inter-community differences. Those who opposed housing segregation were in the minority and calls for experimental mixed housing efforts went unheeded.¹⁹ The result, Darby and Morris argue, was the reinforcement of insular and introverted communities with expectations of conformity:

There is pressure against any non-conformist in the area – the man who criticizes the IRA, or the family which refused to pay its UDA dues, even the drug addict or the sexually promiscuous...In a desperate search for security, anyone who is not completely conformist...is at risk. (2)

In some instances, residents simply abandoned houses. Abandoned houses vexed government officials. Supplementary legislation, which gave the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (NIHE) power to purchase abandoned houses, permitted them considerable latitude in terms of embarking on urban regeneration, in response to Belfast’s already declining industrial base.

Security considerations in Northern Ireland distinguished urban regeneration plans in Belfast from those being implemented elsewhere in Great Britain. Belfast’s derelict houses were characterized as unsafe, “convenient positions for gunmen,” and allegedly “used as hides for weapons and ammunition” (ENV, *Bricked up Houses 1*).²⁰ Various strategies were undertaken to address abandoned houses. Some neighbourhoods were classified as “rehabilitative” (ENV NIHE 1); in these neighbourhoods, houses were repaired and sold. Two examples include Maryville Street, near Donegal Pass in South Belfast, where almost half of the houses (129 of 273) were vacated, and Clifton Park Avenue, near the Crumlin Road in North Belfast, where one third (113 of 369) of houses were vacated. Today, both are sites of rebuilt houses. Houses in other areas were bricked up to be made inaccessible to squatters. In April 1972, there were 1,732 bricked up houses in Belfast (ENV, *Bricking-Up of Houses Policy 1*). Darby suggests some areas of Belfast “had an atmosphere of suspended development, but without any compensatory hope of improvement” (38). In other locations, houses were demolished to facilitate urban regeneration and securitization. Demolishing houses was an unpopular practice in a situation of pressing housing need. In Belfast, urban regeneration involved “creating growth poles on the periphery of Belfast and linking them to the city (and to each other) with an elevated highway system” (Gallaher 60). The construction of an elevated highway system was reported to have affected residentially mixed-community neighbourhoods disproportionately,

19 There is no consensus about what constitutes mixed housing in Northern Ireland. As noted by Jonny Byrne, Ulf Hansson and John Bell, definitions vary: Frederick Boal, Russell Murray and Michael Poole suggest that to be mixed, the total population from minority communities must exceed 10%; Paul Doherty suggests a higher threshold – at least 20%; and, Brendan Murtagh and Patrice Carmichael argue at least 30% is required (15).

20 In Belfast, houses were bricked-up at the request of security forces and health authorities (ENV, *Bricking-Up of Houses Policy 1*).

as both a symptom and cause of housing segregation. An often-cited example of a 'mixed' neighbourhood is the area of Magnetic Street, Clifford Road, and Roden Street in West Belfast; the area was demolished for the construction of the Westlink Roadway. From a security perspective, the dual carriageway provided an effective physical barrier for community segregation (Voluntary Service Bureau 62; Etchart 34).

Darby argues that housing displacement had the effect of compression in areas with "a fortress-like mentality and create[d] confrontation lines" (102). Squatting and paramilitary control of housing were problematic. *SPED's* requirement that houses be vacant prior to application was difficult for those in rent arrears or with no means to relocate, some of whom chose squatting.

SPED administrators discouraged squatting, but the Northern Ireland Community Relations Commission worked with squatters to locate other options, and instituted a "use and occupation payment" in return for providing houses and their upkeep (ENV, *Control of Rents* 2). Squatting could be difficult. In at least one case, "alternative accommodation was arranged and furniture was loaded onto a van. When they [the occupants] arrived at the new house, they found squatters in possession; so, they returned, only to find it [the previous accommodation] occupied as well" (CREL, *Emergency Situation* 1).

Official responses to *SPED* eligibility and compensation also created space for paramilitary involvement in housing (Darby 116). Some paramilitary organizations demanded weekly payments from squatters to "safeguard the householder from death, injury and homelessness" (CREL, *Emergency Situation* 1). In Belfast, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (PIRA) was identified as benefitting from extortion payments in the Lenadoon Avenue and Twinbrook estates and in West Belfast neighbourhoods, and the Ulster Defence Association (UDA) was identified as benefitting in the Shankill Road, Rathcoole estate and in East Belfast neighbourhoods (CREL, *Intimidation in Housing*). Paramilitary actions, which included threats, intimidation and violence as tactics, provided further justification for segregation, securitization, and/or emigration.

Conclusion

The effects of conflict-instigated housing displacement are marked indelibly on Belfast's streetscapes. They are evident in its rebuilt houses and neighbourhoods, in its peace walls, motorways, public art displays, and in the maintenance of physical and social boundaries.

Their permanence is also recorded in archival documents that recount particular versions of the conflict and record *SPED's* development and its opportunistic operation to curtail emigration, bolster state securitisation, and rebuild a Victorian-age city. A continued presence of intimidation and conflict-instigated displacement is also evident in textual, visual, and folkloric representations (Side 486). *SPED* continues to

operate, although a September 2017 Court of Appeal decision denied the ability of scheme administrators to devalue house costs in interface areas (*Belfast Telegraph*).²¹ *SPED* compensates owners and occupiers in response to housing loss due to sectarian, inter-community conflict, intra-community disputes, and presently for racist and xenophobic acts against resettled ethnic minorities and workers who are imbricated in the persistence of Northern Ireland’s opposing, two-community model (McKee).

SPED continues to be shaped by political and financial concerns. While its costs were estimated as running “into untold millions of pounds,” it operated in compassionate, yet ungenerous, ways, with the fruit vendor’s *ex gratia* compensation payment as an example (FIN, *Compensation for Losses* 4). With an undisclosed amount, his payment was made almost a year after his appeal for monetary compensation. Despite hesitations that “once the principle of compensation is extended in this field, it opens up a very wide door” (FIN, *Joint Memo* 1), it was noted that “the payment does not pretend to be 100% reimbursement, but merely to meet the brunt of the loss” (FIN, *Intimidation Memorandum* 12). The realities of persistent housing displacement and loss due to threats, intimidation, and violence, and the continued existence of *SPED* sustain Northern Ireland’s physical and social boundaries, even in the face of its contemporary peace accord.

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21 The 2017 legal case involved the Mountpottinger Road interface, East Belfast, the same area about which RUC Officer Bruce Davison had commented about, in 1973.

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