



The Burning Bush—Online article archive

McGuinness robbing Protestant school children of funds



Martin McGuinness

Protestant schools are losing out in the latest round of cash allocations, it has been claimed. The claims come as Stormont Education Minister Martin McGuinness prepares to announce a major package worth more than £100 million to upgrade 22 dilapidated schools throughout Northern Ireland. Sources have complained that schools from the controlled sector in the Belfast Education Board area, which are attended mainly by Protestants, will not benefit from the windfall. "Whether it's a failing of the board or

of the department we don't know," a source told Ulster Television, in Belfast.

The refusing of extra funds to the controlled sector is in stark contrast to the benefits bestowed on a number of Belfast schools controlled by the Council for Catholic Maintained Schools. They have been given funding to improve facilities. It is believed that around half of the investment package due to be announced at Stormont on Thursday will be made up of conventional resources, while the rest will be financed by Public Private Partnerships.

Last year, Mr McGuinness announced a package of £130 million to bring rundown schools up to modern standards. But the Sinn Fein Minister has come under fire from unionist critics in the Assembly who claim he has favoured schools from the nationalist community. Mr McGuinness has vehemently denied these claims, insisting that money has been allocated purely on the basis of need.

SECOND NATURE

The Stormont Department of Education has refused to comment on the details of the expenditure plans for 2002-03, other than to say that it will be a "massive investment." As a self-confessed IRA terrorist leader, depriving the innocent of what is theirs would be second nature to McGuinness!

The "Minister" is involved in another row with loyalist politicians. Three Ulster Unionist members of the assembly's education committee said the consultation material produced by the Department of Education in Northern Ireland on the review of post-primary education is "seriously flawed" and it did not give a balanced view on the issue. The Burns review of Northern Ireland's education system recommended an end to the controversial 11-plus transfer test within two years.

The exam is a selection test for children in primary seven and determines to which type of school they will transfer.

The unionists allege that there is a clear imbalance in the promotional video and little substantial criticism of Burns in respect of his proposal on a new collegiate system. It is claimed that the video is a promotional tool for those who favour the "establishment of bog standard comprehensive education in Northern Ireland."