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PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE
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WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

The Rt Hon Sir Patrick Mayhew QC MP
Secretary of State for
Northern Ireland
Whitehall
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

17 July 1996

Dear Paddy,

NORTHERN IRELAND GRAND COMMITTEE AND THE 1996/97 LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

When we spoke a couple of weeks ago about the NIGC, you said that you would come back to me on the progress you were making with the NI parties. I fully appreciate the problems that you have had on your plate since then and the difficulties you will have had in taking this forward. However, I think you should be aware that I am continuing to receive strong signals that the UUs take this matter very seriously, and I need hardly emphasise that UU support in the debate on the Queen's Speech in October would be very welcome. Perhaps you could come back to me before tomorrow afternoon's Business Statement on this matter? If at all possible, I would like to say something encouraging at what is likely to be the last Business Statement before the House rises.

On a separate but related matter, the provisional main programme of primary legislation for the next session does not, as you know, include any specific NI Bills. I recall that you made a bid for a Police Bill at an earlier stage but that the general feeling was that it was not right to pursue this at the moment. I wonder whether, since then, you have had any further thoughts on legislation which you could bring forward next session. I think that, with two substantial Scottish Bills in the programme and three other minor ones, it might be sensible for there to be an NI Bill too. I am sure that would be well received in the Province. Perhaps you could drop me a line on that in the next week or so?

I am copying this to the Prime Minister.

TONY NEWTON