

25. Feb. 1997 20:54

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No. 3820 P. 2/9



SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rt Hon Antony Newton OBE MP  
The Lord President of the Council  
Privy Council Office  
Whitehall  
London  
SW1A 2AT

NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
WHITEHALL  
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

Dear Tony

NORTHERN IRELAND GRAND COMMITTEE (NIGC)

Following our recent discussions and my consultations with various Northern Ireland and Opposition parties, I propose to send out the attached letters about expanding the role and remit of the NIGC. I am writing separately to the SDLP because, despite their concerns about the NIGC, I have been unable to arrange a meeting to discuss all this.

The draft explains that we intend to proceed with the original five proposals in my letter of 25 October and that we also propose to bring the Committee closer in line with the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees in respect of the attendance of Lords Ministers, the referring of certain Northern Ireland Bills to the Committee, the use of adjournment debates after NIGC meetings and the provision for referring Statutory Instruments to the NIGC instead of Standing Committee or taking them on the floor of the House.

I do not intend to change the membership of the NIGC (although the quorum will be reduced to 7) or to propose a set number of meetings and so the NIGC will not quite be on all fours with the Scottish and Welsh Grand Committees but will have the same role in examining legislation and in its ability to question Ministers.

c-PB  
MA.

Prime Minister

This exercise now looks to be on track - Trimble should be content that he is getting the same as the Scottish Grand Committee.

25 February 1997

Are you content with the proposed timing? It should meet the political needs.

John 25/2.

File  
Learn OK.  
6/3.  
See - but for  
point, pl. as per  
27.2



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I understand that you hope I will be able to write to the consultees on Thursday 27 February enclosing revised draft Standing Orders. That should allow us to lay the necessary motion before the House in the early part of the week beginning 3 March and, subject to your agreement, I hope the debate on the motion could take place during the week commencing 10 March.

Subject to any immediate reactions you and copy recipients may have I will therefore issue letters on the lines of the attached drafts during the course of Thursday 27 February.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Home Secretary, the Lord Privy Seal, the Chief Whip, the Secretaries of State for Scotland and Wales and to Murdo MacLean (Chief Whip's Office), Bill Jeffery and Alan Sandall (Cabinet Office).

PM

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