

cc: SEW  
SP  
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File

PRIVY COUNCIL OFFICE  
WHITEHALL, LONDON SW1A 2AT

13 May 1997

Dear Ms.

NORTHERN IRELAND BILLS

I have seen your letter of 10 May to the Prime Minister seeking policy clearance for measures proposed in two bills for the coming session of Parliament; the bill to replace the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1996, and the bill to implement the broad recommendations of the North report on parades.

I have no problem with the policy considerations. However, I should take this opportunity to draw your attention to questions of Parliamentary handling. When we considered these bills at QFL, and indeed at Cabinet, the Emergency Provisions Bill was described as short and broadly uncontroversial; it is now being described as possibly controversial and long/substantial. Similarly, the Parades and Marches Bill was described as fairly short; it is now considered to be medium to long. I have no wish to stand in the way of either bill, but I am concerned that with a packed programme, it will be crucial that we are all aware well in advance what will be required, and that all options other than primary legislation are considered. If primary legislation is required, LEG Committee will need to consider carefully how the bills can be accommodated in the form required. In any case, it is important that bills are drafted in good time for introduction. This particularly applies to the Parades and Marches Bill if this is to be introduced in the Lords as suggested at Cabinet.

I am copying this to the Prime Minister, members of IN committee, the Lord Chancellor, the Secretary of State for Scotland, the President of the Council, the Attorney General, the Chief Whip, the Captain of the Gentlemen at Arms, and to Sir Robin Butler.

Yours ever

Richard

RICHARD

The Rt Hon Dr Marjorie Mowlam MP  
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland

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