



Minister of State

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PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL RECEIVED	
11 SEP 1997	
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The Rt Hon Ann Taylor MP
Lord President of the Council
and Leader of the House of Commons
Privy Council Office
68 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2AT

(10 September 1997

Dear Ann

I understand that, in the aftermath of the Prime Minister's meeting with David Trimble to discuss 'confidence building measures for Unionists', and the Secretary of State's Northern Ireland letter of 29 August 1997, you are considering the possibility of proceeding with Northern Ireland policing legislation by Bill. In the Secretary of State's absence, I am writing to bring to your attention some additional considerations to complement the Secretary of State's letter.

In the letter, she highlighted the fact there is very urgent need to make progress in the field of policing reform. The proposed Policing legislation has confidence building elements within it; and represents a paving measure to allow us to implement a range of other such measures. Failure to proceed with policing legislation in this session would, therefore, in confidence building terms, be very much a third best option behind, as the best alternative, proceeding with legislation by a Bill, and, as very much a second best (given the widespread opposition to the Order in Council process in Northern Ireland), proceeding with legislation by Order in Council.

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Policing has been a feature of the debate in Northern Ireland for some years now. It is very important that Government should be seen to be acting constructively to move the debate and process forward, especially by implementing measures, such as our proposals in the field of police complaints, which have received widespread support from across the board. Not to do so would represent a significant departure from public pledges.

We have a comprehensive programme of further reform planned; however, legislation is an essential pre-requisite for key steps to be taken to its overall implementation. I believe that a failure by Government to progress (with some degree of urgency) these sensible reforms will have a widespread corrosive effect - on the morale of the police; on the attitude of the wider Unionist community, who will be suspicious that failure to act on long heralded reforms signals even more radical longer term intentions in this field; and also on the Nationalist community, whose calls for police reform have long gone unheeded. Nationalist suspicions of Government credibility will be confirmed if even these (in their eyes) minor reforms are adjourned sine die at Unionist behest.

We have a considerable programme of reform to initiate; I am keen to proceed with it as soon as possible in order to get visible results on the ground, so tackling these credibility gaps and building confidence. But to do so, we must legislate, in this session.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yours truly Adam'.

ADAM INGRAM JP MP
Minister of State

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