

NORTHERN IRELAND FORUM FOR POLITICAL DIALOGUE

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*cc: PS
VAC*

The Rt Hon Tony Blair MP
Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

18 July 1997

Dear Prime Minister

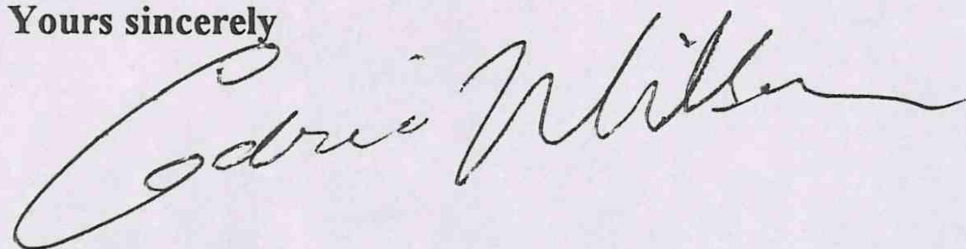
Standing Committee A (Public Order Issues) was established by the Northern Ireland Forum for Political Dialogue to examine, inter alia, the problems which arise in relation to parades in Northern Ireland and to make recommendations which would contribute to better understanding and amelioration of those problems. The Committee's Report was adopted by the Forum on 20 June 1997 and a copy of the Report was forwarded to the Secretary of State and Minister of State together with an invitation to meet with the Committee to discuss the findings and recommendations in the Report.

The Committee is however disappointed to note that both the Secretary of State and Minister of State have declined to meet with the Committee. The Committee is extremely concerned that the Secretary of State has over recent weeks met with other groups and organisations but has refused to meet with democratically elected representatives of the Forum to discuss what is a crucial and central issue in the Province. In its response to the Committee's request for a meeting the Secretary of State's office said that the Government is committed to full implementation of the recommendations of the North Report. However, our Report also deals with issues apart from those included in the North Report.

The Committee believes that the Secretary of State's handling of the situation is unacceptable and that her dismissive approach demonstrates contempt for the democratic process. The Committee is further of the opinion that if the Secretary of State continues to refuse to meet with elected representatives that her position as Secretary of State will become untenable.

The Committee would therefore invite you to meet with a delegation from the Committee to discuss the Report and the parades issue in general. A copy of the Report is enclosed.

Yours sincerely



CEDRIC WILSON
Chairman
Standing Committee A

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