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Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

London SW1A 2AH

14 October 1997

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15/14.*

Dear John,

Northern Ireland Parades: NIO Proposal for Legislation

The Northern Ireland Secretary's minute of 7 October requested approval from IN colleagues for the Public Processions etc (Northern Ireland) Bill. I am responding in the Foreign Secretary's absence, given the deadline.

There are no FCO objections to the substance of the Bill, but officials have drawn attention to one point. The minute mentions that the Irish Government is likely to back any SDLP opposition to the proposed extended remit of the Commission. In fact, the Irish Government has also expressed strong reservations on its own account, most notably in Ahern's comments to the Prime Minister in Strasbourg on 10 October (your letter to Ken Lindsay of 10 October). Similar concerns have been raised with increasing urgency through the Anglo-Irish Secretariat in recent weeks (and today's Irish Times indicates that they are briefing the Irish press in these terms).

I am copying this letter to the Private Offices of other members of IN, and to Jan Polley (Cabinet Office).

*yours etc,
Dominick*

(Dominick Chilcott)
Private Secretary

John Holmes Esq
10 Downing Street

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