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Top AR
CCD
JEN

1. John. Yes.
I think you have dealt.

2. John. A2.

Angus Lapsley Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A

15 October 1997

Dear Mr Lapsley,

DRAFT POLICE (NORTHERN IRELAND) BILL

I am working on a draft Bill which is implementing changes, inter alia, to the police complaints system in Northern Ireland in line with recommendations in an independent report published earlier this year. The report recommended that a new police complaints body should be appointed and that the appointment should be made, not by the Secretary of State as at present, but by Her Majesty. I am writing to seek your approval for me to approach Sir Robert Fellowes to clear this change.

Background

The current police complaints system in Northern Ireland involves the civilian oversight of police complaints by a body, the Independent Commission for Police Complaints. The ICPC members are appointed by the Secretary of State (using Sir Leonard Peach's guidelines). However, in a report by Dr Maurice Hayes into the complaints system, which was published in January this year, he recommended that the ICPC should be replaced by a Police Ombudsman. He also recommended, to ensure the status and independence of the office, that the appointment should be made drawing as far as possible on the precedent of the Parliamentary Ombudsman for Northern Ireland. One element of this would be appointment by Her Majesty.

Although this would be a change from the position for the ICPC, it is not so unusual. For example, the Chairman of the Police Complaints Authority in England and Wales is appointed by Her Majesty as is the Chairman of the Criminal Cases Review Commission.

Ministers in the Northern Ireland Office have concluded, therefore, that the appointment ought, if possible, to be by Her Majesty to give it the correct status and standing.

I should be grateful if you, and Ann Polley to whom I am copying this note, could let me know whether or not you are content for me to write to Sir Robert Fellowes to ask for Her Majesty's approval to the change. (I am assuming that the letter should go from the Private Secretary to my Secretary of State, but should be grateful for any views you have on this.)

Yours sincerely,

S. Rogers

SIMON ROGERS