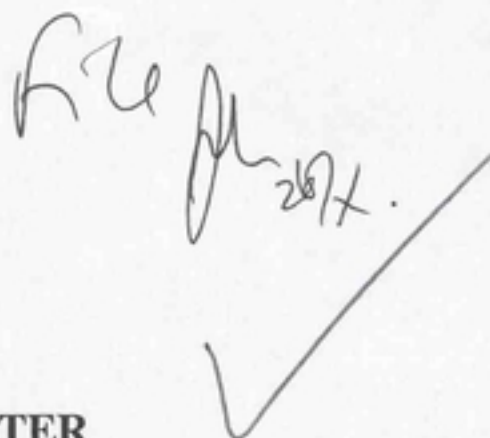


CONFIDENTIALHandwritten signature and a large checkmark.

From: John Holmes
Date: 16 October 1997

PRIME MINISTER

cc: Jonathan Powell
Alastair Campbell

NORTHERN IRELAND: PARADES COMMISSION

You commented on my minute below that you wanted to speak to Trimble. I see no problem with this, but you do not actually need to do so. I have talked to both Mo and him again today. Mo has agreed to use a form of words about the extended remit which makes clear that it will come into force and within a matter of months. This will help Trimble quite a lot, and counteract his displeasure over sports events. He is much calmer today. I also used your name liberally in expressing concern about the letter bomb sent to his office (a very crude device, probably from a minor and ineffective Republican group).

Mo is announcing and publishing the Parades Commission legislation tomorrow, prior to introducing it in the House of Lords. As it now stands, following all these discussions, there is something in it which pleases everyone, and bits which both sides don't like. That is usually the best position for HMG to be in.

You also asked why the GAA seemed so important to the Unionists. They are not of course particularly interested in the sports fixtures themselves. But GAA events are the occasion for much Irish flag waving and general assertion of Irish allegiance, which the Unionists find offensive. The Irish point is that, while this may be true, GAA events do not pose any kind of threat to public order in the same way that Loyalist marches do.

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