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See letter out  
File

John S/Ki

From: John Holmes  
Date: 1 November 1996

PRIME MINISTER

DECOMMISSIONING

It is stupid - when we need  
them - how can we the NIO et al  
out of the Unions' concerns.

You will recall that, after the Party Conference, we asked the NIO and other <sup>NIO much</sup>  
departments to look again at extending the decommissioning bill to the rest of <sup>into UK</sup>  
the UK, given Unionist concerns (my letter behind, flagged).

Paddy Mayhew's response is below. With the support of all the other Ministers  
concerned, he concludes that extending the Bill is just too difficult, and would  
seriously complicate the Bill's passage (he is keen to get it through before  
Christmas).

Enough that -  
carefully  
for 11.

I still do not find the central argument against extension wholly convincing:  
that ordinary criminals would exploit the Bill to get rid of "hot" weapons. How  
often is this really likely to happen?

But I do not think it is worth continuing the battle against such Whitehall odds.  
I therefore suggest we give in gracefully, while insisting that the NIO should  
explain clearly and frankly to the Unionists why we have, reluctantly, reached  
this conclusion. They also need to do serious work on the public presentation.  
The current lines in Annex B are pretty pathetic.

Content for me to write out on these lines, to allow LG to go ahead on this  
basis next week?

fdecomm.jd

John

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