



Minister of State

Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
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NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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19 March 1998

Dear Tony

REFORM OF FIREARMS LAW IN NORTHERN IRELAND

John Holmes' letter of 4 February conveyed your decision that we should not pursue, for the time being, any move to prohibit target handguns here and that we should also avoid any suggestion of a review of personal protection weapons (PPWs). The letter also indicated that you were content for the remaining reform proposals to go ahead to consultation, on the assumption that they did not have the same sensitivity, a point you asked me to check again.

David Trimble delegated responsibility for this matter to Willie Ross who was given an overview of our proposals by officials on 16 February. The latter expressed himself well pleased with what we told him. He also recognised the difficulties surrounding the subject of PPWs and handguns which he described as "a cactus". I have since contacted David Trimble again about the matter, and he is content that our remaining reform proposals should now be published.



In light of this positive response we intend to proceed with plans to publish our proposals as a consultation paper on 2 April. This will be done by way of an Arranged PQ and accompanying Press Release.

I am copying this letter to other members of IN, Donald Dewar and to Sir Robin Butler.

*Yours Aye
Adam*

ADAM INGRAM JP MP
Minister of State