

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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Mr John Holmes
Principal Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
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*Prime Minister
Hard to argue. Oh?*

26 March 1998

Dear John,

THE NAREY REPORT

Thank you for your letter of 19 March concerning the above.

My Secretary of State agrees fully that this is an issue which needs to be handled with considerable care over coming weeks. However Martin Narey began his inquiry in December and she promised publication of his findings at an early date. Within recent weeks we have been faced with 2 adjournment debates, a PNQ and a number of parliamentary questions about the issues which it covers. Some of its recommendations have already been implemented, but others require the authority of the report itself to enable officials to proceed. The Northern Ireland Select Committee intends to investigate the Northern Ireland Prison Service in April, and Sir David Ramsbotham's report will not be available to us until May at the earliest. She believes therefore that not only is the pressure to publish Narey becoming irresistible, but that it is desirable from our own point of view to have it in the public domain to add legitimacy to current policies and some of the changes we wish to make. It would also help the Unionists to have a statement sooner rather than later and have it debated in the House of Commons.

what does it say?

*CC PTB
✓ AL*



We do not, at least at this point in time, envisage a further statement when the Ramsbotham report becomes available. Our latest information is that 2 April would provide the optimum opportunity to make a statement on Narey and I would be grateful for agreement to proceed on that date. We have agreement from the President of the Council for this.

I am copying this letter to Ken Sutton (Home Office), Paul Cohen (President of the Council's Office) and Jan Poley (Cabinet Office).

Yours ever,

Ken

W K LINDSAY