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FROM THE PRIVATE SECRETARY TO THE LEADER OF THE HOUSE  
AND THE CHIEF WHIP

13th July, 1982.

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Dear Willie,

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

I undertook yesterday to let you have a note about the priority which has been given in the House of Lords legislative programme to the Employment and Northern Ireland Bills.

The Lord Privy Seal had always expected the Northern Ireland Bill to take far less time in the Lords than in the Commons because only a very few amendments are expected at Committee stage. In these circumstances it has been possible through agreement with the other Parties to expedite the later stages of the Bill on the floor of the House. This is in stark contrast to the Employment Bill where no such agreement would be contemplated by the Opposition and on which the House is likely today to have its first all night sitting since March 1980.

No stages of the Northern Ireland Bill will have been advanced at the expense of the Employment Bill. As soon as the guillotine for the Northern Ireland Bill was made known in the Commons, Second Reading was planned in the Lords for Thursday, 8th July in place of the second Committee day of the Transport Bill. The remaining stages of the Northern Ireland Bill will be taken next week during the necessary interval between Committee and Report of the Employment Bill. Indeed, the Report and Third Reading of the Employment Bill will not be delayed by any of the outstanding Bills in the Lords, with the possible exception of the Finance Bill which has a statutory deadline of early August and which will only take one day in this House.

In fact  
the House  
rose at  
about 5 am  
(last Tuesday)

Yours ever  
Michael Pownall

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16 June 1982

*R John*

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME

Your letter of 27 May about the congestion of business in the House of Lords asked for an assessment of the extent and likely difficulty of amendments to the Employment Bill.

There are three issues on which I envisage a need to introduce Lords amendments. The first arises from a recent Scottish judgement as a result of which factory sit-ins may be held to be lawful (at least in Scotland). My present view is that an amendment to the law on immunities probably is needed to counteract this danger but my officials are still discussing the matter with the other departments concerned. The other 2 issues concern the apparent efforts of certain Labour-controlled local authorities to circumvent the provisions of the Bill which deal with the closed shop and trade union labour only requirements in commercial contracts. I am afraid that all three amendments are likely to encounter considerable opposition in the Lords and may of course provide the occasion for the Opposition to re-open the debate on each of these subjects when the Bill returns to the Commons.

I hope that it will not be necessary to consider delaying the Bill's return to the Commons until the spill-over. Our supporters are naturally anxious that the Bill should reach the Statute Book as soon as possible; and it has already been suggested by some of our opponents that we are in no great hurry to implement many of the provisions because we recognise the difficulties they may cause. This of course is nonsense; but it would be a pity if we appeared to give any credence to these suggestions and either our opponents or our supporters were to feel that impetus was being lost. Instead the Bill should be one of the centre pieces of the Party Conference.

Far more important, we would be open to considerable criticism if during the summer industrial problems arose and the Bill would have helped in their resolution. For example, now that the Scottish Courts appear to have given legal protection to sit-ins I believe we must put the law right without delay or risk some very awkward





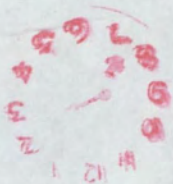
situations north of the Border.

Lastly I do feel that it is far better from the House of Commons point of view that the highly controversial amendments (and in particular the amendment on sit-ins) which are to be moved in the Lords should be dealt with before the recess, but no doubt the Chief Whip will have something to say about that.

I am copying this letter to the recipients of yours.

*J. M. Norman*





16 JUN 1982