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Minister of State

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The Rt Hon Sir Michael Havers QC MP
Attorney General
Royal Courts of Justice
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29/2
28 August 1984

Dear Michael,

DELAYS IN COMING TO TRIAL

I am writing in Jim Prior's absence on leave to thank you for your letter of 31 July. He is grateful for your support.
will request if required

Jim appreciates your concern that we should not compound our present security problems by allowing a major shift of scheduled cases away from the Crumlin Road Courthouse. Its secure communications with Belfast prison make it the inevitable choice for these cases, and as you say, if it is over-congested, the cases to be moved elsewhere should prima facie be the non-scheduled jury ones. We simply felt that Sir George Baker had a point that the statutory limitation of scheduled cases to the Crumlin Road Courthouse was unduly inflexible, and that the authorities ought to have the opportunity of moving a scheduled case elsewhere, however rarely. But the Chief Constable has made the point, like yourself, that we must not let this cause us fresh security problems.

With regard to speed in processing cases, my officials are in discussion with the Director about his staffing needs. They are looking at them sympathetically, and I hope that it will be possible to satisfy them, though you will realise that we must work within the general constraints of Government policy with regard to public expenditure and Civil Service numbers. I am sure that you and the Director will have noted that it was part of the same conclusion of the Working Group that he and the police should examine whether there is any scope for reducing

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time scales by alterations in administration or management; this is, of course, where possible, an alternative route to the same end as the recruitment of additional staff.

I realise that more silks will not axiomatically bring about an effectively larger Criminal Bar, still less a more rational distribution of briefs amongst its members by solicitors. But I feel that the least that we can do is encourage that to take place by all practical means.

I am sending copies of this letter to the Prime Minister, the Lord Chancellor, the Home Secretary, the Scottish Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

Wm
Adam

ADAM BUTLER

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