

CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

GR



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

WHITEHALL

LONDON SW1A 2AZ

F E R Butler Esq
Principal Private Secretary
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

Handwritten signature

29th April 1985

Dear Robin,

You wrote to Jim Daniell on 19 April about the suggestion from Sir David Price MP that the Prime Minister might 'sponsor' and name one of the second pair of refrigerated vessels being built by Harland and Wolff for the Blue Star Line. In addition Mark Addison had written to me on 29 March about an invitation to the Prime Minister from Larne Harbour Limited to open the new passenger terminal at that port.

Our advice would be that each of these engagements is inherently worth carrying out in its own right and would be of appropriate weight for the Prime Minister. The sensible thing would obviously be to include both of them in the schedule for a more comprehensive visit to Northern Ireland, as you discussed with Robert Andrew. It would be entirely practicable to contain both of these events on (say) the second day of a two-day programme.

Larne Harbour is the only commercial port in Northern Ireland in private ownership. The managing company, Larne Harbour Limited, is a wholly-owned subsidiary of the European Ferries Group. Mr Parker, who is a director of the Group, is also Chairman of the Felixstowe Dock Company. His Larne company, which employs 140 people, has been energetic and enterprising in its development of the port from fairly modest dimensions to its present status as a vital link with the Great Britain mainland, handling 35% of all trade passing through Northern Ireland ports and over 80% of all sea-bound tourist traffic to the Province. The new multi-purpose passenger terminal building, costing £1.9 million, will add substantially to the comfort and convenience of passengers using the port.

Turning to the Blue Star proposition, as you know the order for four vessels was a very significant element in providing the Belfast shipyard with a reasonable flow of work until further orders could be achieved. The first pair of vessels have already been named (one by the Duchess of Kent). The standard naming ceremony at Harland and Wolff can be a somewhat protracted affair, allowing for a tour of the vessel as well as the naming ceremony itself and a formal luncheon with speeches, but this could no doubt be abbreviated to fit in with other events in a well-rounded programme.

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I therefore attach draft letters which might go from you to Larne Harbour Limited and from Mr Alison to Sir David Price. You will see that each reply expresses interest in principle, but falls short of final commitment; we have very much in mind the inevitable uncertainties about the Prime Minister's forward programme, the development of political events here both internally and at the Anglo-Irish level, and the need to take careful security advice closer to the time. However, neither of these engagements necessarily has to take place on a set date.

*Yours Sincerely
Neil Ward*

N D WARD

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OPERATION EQUITY

NIO want 2 days, one in West, overnight at Hillsborough, one in East.

Possible ingredients

Day 1 :-

A school

Army unit + UDR

RUC training school, Enniskillen

PM to visit large city in West - Londonderry (probably not), Enniskillen or Omagh.

An important factor will be the Sinn Fein gains in the local elections.

Reception and dinner at Hillsborough

Day 2 :-

Harland + Wolff and/or passenger terminal at Larne and/or small firm in advanced technology.

Robert Andrew will think further about programme. I provisionally gave him 11-12 or 24-25 September. FERB



10 DOWNING STREET

CF
Mark
Ent. All same paper as
filed on FEBS subject.

After consulting N10
I suggest you reply to Mr.

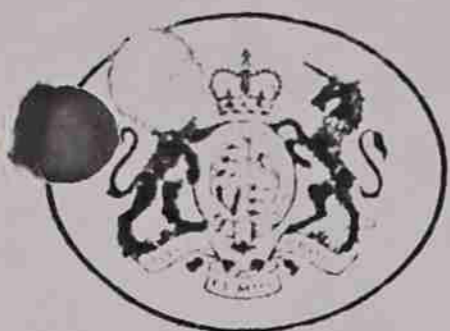
Parker's letter on the
lines below.

Paper to be filed on
file dealing with PM's
visit to Northern Ireland.

FEBS

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Butler
RJ

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Yours Sincerely
Neil Ward

N D WARD

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DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER.....

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE.....

To

Enclosures

Copies to be sent to

J.P.
D J Parker Esq
Chairman
Larne Harbour Ltd
European House
The Dock
Felixstowe
Suffolk

Hidden copies:
PS/S of S (NI)

EL3AG2

(Full Postal Address)

(Full Address, if Necessary)

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY.....

PS/Prime Minister

(Name of Signatory)

TEA

The Prime Minister has asked me to reply to your letter of 27 March extending a ^{inviting} ~~kind invitation~~ to her to open your new passenger terminal at the port of Larne.

I cannot commit the Prime Minister to accepting
~~While I am not in a position to convey the Prime Minister's definite~~
~~acceptance of that invitation at the moment,~~ ^{but} she has asked me to say
that, if she ^{were to} ~~is able to fit~~ a visit to Northern Ireland into her
~~programme~~ ^{during} over the coming months, she would ~~look very favourably on~~ ^{be glad to consider}
~~the inclusion~~ ^{including} of this ceremony as one of her engagements. *I cannot go beyond that at present for reasons which I am sure that you will understand.*
You have stressed that there is considerable flexibility as far as a date is
concerned, and if you are content to leave it on that basis for ^{the time being} now we
will come back to you in due course. ^{If in the event it does not} ~~either to confirm a definite~~
~~acceptance or to suggest that you make alternative arrangements (and~~
~~if that should be necessary, the Prime Minister would be happy to commend~~ ^{prove possible for the Prime Minister to accept this engagement she has asked me to say that she}
~~the engagement~~ ^{it} to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Mr Hurd.

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