



Government Chief Whip

12 Downing Street, London SW1 3 June 1981

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*Handwritten signature: M. J. Jopling*

Thank you for your letter of 1 June following your talk with Enoch Powell. It is interesting that the Ulster Unionists seem to be seeking closer relations with the Whips Office. Some weeks ago Jim Molyneaux made an approach to Francis Pym about developing closer links and having more consultations with Francis. Francis, of course, saw Jim Molyneaux and indicated that he was ready to see him, ie Molyneaux whenever he wished.

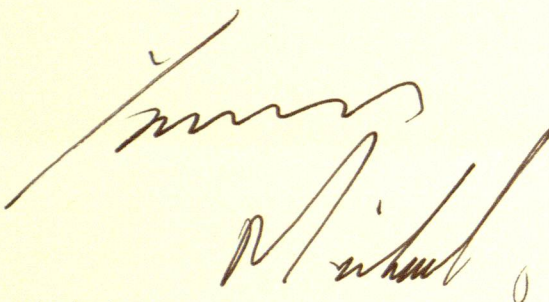
The links between the Ulster Unionists and the Opposition Whips Office clearly stem from the time when the Opposition were in Government and were dependent upon the Ulster Unionists for their survival. It is clearly reflected in the measures taken during that period that there was much closer involvement between the then Government and the Ulster Unionists than there is now; but obviously different circumstances now exist.

It is also interesting that no approach has come from their Chief Whip, Willie Ross. The fact of the matter is that the Ulster Unionists receive advance copies of statements; they, rather than the Official Opposition are consulted about Orders relating to Northern Ireland being taken on the floor of the House or in Committee, (and I may say that they have not been particularly helpful in agreeing to Orders being taken in Committee). It is also the case that Murdo MacLean consults Jim Molyneaux over all Northern Ireland business which is to be taken on the floor of the House. They are in fact consulted over business more than any other minority party including the Liberals, and whilst I cannot speak for Northern Ireland Office Ministers, there is no question of the Whips Office having closer links with Ian Paisley than with the Ulster Unionists.

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As far as Carol Mather is concerned, he tells me that shortly after your first conversation he approached Molyneaux, and then Powell, in order to clear up any misunderstanding about favour shown toward Paisley by the Whips Office. He assured Powell that as far as this office was concerned, and as far as he was concerned personally, there was absolutely no discrimination at all. Powell accepted this, and there the matter ended. Carol Mather has regular contacts, on the passage of Northern Ireland business, with Ulster Members irrespective of party. But of course this has to take place on an impartial basis. It is difficult, therefore, to identify anything tangible that could be done that is not being done at present.

I am not sure whether the Ulster Unionists are seeking to be consulted on anything other than Northern Ireland business. Clearly, however, if Humphrey sees advantage from his point of view in closer consultation on wider issues, then I should, of course, be very happy to consider this. Or indeed if there is some way in which the Conservative Party and the Ulster Unionists can come closer together at party level, I should equally be happy to consider this. But I think that before I initiate any discussions I would wish to be assured that Humphrey had been consulted. Perhaps if you have any ideas on how best to take this forward in the light of your discussions with Enoch Powell, you, Humphrey and I could have a word about it. I must confess to a slight suspicion that Enoch is being mischievous.



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8th June, 1981

Thank you so much for your letter of  
3rd June.

I think I would feel inclined to take  
no further action at the present stage,  
and just to see how matters develop.

Ian Gow

The Rt. Hon. Michael Jopling, M.P.