

CONFIDENTIAL



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
WHITEHALL
LONDON SW1A 2AZ

SECRETARY OF STATE
FOR
NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rt Hon Viscount Whitelaw
CH MC
Lord President of the Council
68 Whitehall
LONDON
SW1A 2AY

[Handwritten signature]
29/2

29 February 1984

[Handwritten signature]

LEGISLATIVE PROGRAMME 1984-85: NORTHERN IRELAND BILLS

Thank you for your letter of 23 February.

I was glad to note that QL Committee remains of the view that an Elections (Northern Ireland) Bill should be in the 1984-85 Legislative programme. As you know, I attach great importance to this Bill.

I was naturally disappointed by what you say about a Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Bill. Whilst I accept that until we have reached decisions on the Baker Report there must be some uncertainty about its scope, I do not believe that the Bill would take a very long time to prepare. I remain of the view that the Government will be exposed to considerable criticism for failing to act on the Baker Report until 1985-86 by which time I am sure that this legislation would become essential; my position would be contrasted sharply with that of the Home Office, which legislated so quickly following the Jellicoe Report on the Prevention of Terrorism Act. You also said that legislation emerging from the review of measures to combat terrorism which the Cabinet commissioned following the Harrods bombing would need to be UK-wide and could not therefore readily be incorporated in a Northern Ireland Bill. I accept of course that such legislation might need to cover the whole country. But I had in mind the possibility that, since it is in Northern Ireland that the greatest mischief lies, and since the measures would be closely associated with the current Emergency Provisions, there would be

CONFIDENTIAL

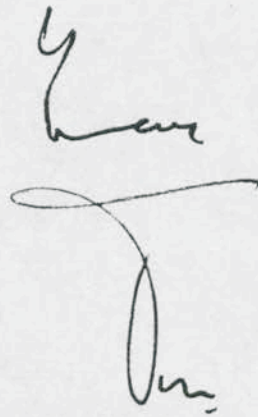
/...

CONFIDENTIAL

a case for implementing them in respect of the Province in an Emergency Provisions Bill which could be matched in respect of Great Britain when a suitable opportunity arose. It is also the case that the part of the Prevention of Terrorism Act which applies only to Great Britain provides better safeguards than does the Northern Ireland legislation, so in this respect we would be bringing Northern Ireland into line with the rest of the country.

At Cabinet on 1 March I will wish to refer to points of this kind and to reserve my position on whether to seek space for a Bill nearer the time should pressures for legislation on the Baker Report become unacceptable or should measures emerging from Cabinet's review merit early implementation for the Province.

I am copying this letter to members of the Cabinet and Sir Robert Armstrong.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to be 'G. Hume' or similar, with a large flourish extending to the right.

fam legistⁿ P+11



29 FEB 1984