

FROM: D A LAVERY
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

DATE: 20 SEPTEMBER 1996

cc PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) -B
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) -B
PS/Baroness Denton (DED&L) -B
PS/PUS (B&L) -B
PS/Sir David Fell -B
Mr Legge -B
Mr Thomas o/r -B
Mr Steele -B
Mr Watkins -B
Mr Leach (B&L) -B
Mr Maccabe -B
Mr Perry -B
Mr Wood (B&L) -B
Mr Beeton -B
Mr Bell -B
Mr Hill (B&L) -B
Mr Stephens -B
Mr Carson -B
Mr Gamble, DED
Mr Jagelman

PS/SECRETARY OF STATE (B&L) -B

FORUM: BOYCOTTING OF BUSINESSES IN NORTHERN IRELAND
SECRETARY OF STATE'S MINISTERS CASE: SOS/00587/96

1. Mr John Gorman, Chairman of the Forum, wrote to the Secretary of State on 9 September enclosing a copy of a motion passed by the Forum on Friday, 6 September on the matter of boycotting of businesses in Northern Ireland. The motion of the Forum concludes by calling on the Secretary of State and the Chief Constable "to take immediate action on the many breaches of the Law involved".

Discussion

2. Allegations of boycotting of businesses is a matter of growing concern amongst local politicians and businessmen. Michael Ancram agreed to meet with representatives of the Unionist parties on 17 September to hear their concerns and to receive a copy of a report compiled by 'Business and

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Professional People for the Union'. The Minister has agreed to hold a further meeting with affected traders.

3. Ministers have previously agreed that they would not, as a matter of course, respond in substantive terms to every communication from the Forum. In this case however, in the light of the continued high profile of the boycotting issue, it would be appropriate that a response should be sent. The Secretary of State condemned the alleged discrimination against traders during a doorstep interview on 16 September, and may wish to reiterate that message in response to the Forum's motion.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that the Secretary of State respond to Mr Gorman in the terms of the attached draft response, condemning discrimination in any form.

[signed DAL]

D A LAVERY

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DRAFT LETTER FOR SIGNATURE BY THE SECRETARY OF STATE

J R Gorman Esq CVO, CBE, MC, DL
Chairman
Northern Ireland Forum
Third Floor
Interpoint Centre
20-24 York Street
BELFAST
BT15 1AQ

Thank you for your letter of 9 September in which you drew to my attention a motion passed by the Forum on Friday 6 September on the boycotting of businesses in Northern Ireland.

I have noted the terms of the Forum's motion. As I have already stated publicly, any form of discrimination, whether it is the boycotting of businesses or any other, is wholly unjust. It is wrong, and it must stop.

You may know that Michael Ancram recently met with representatives of Unionist parties to discuss this matter, and has further agreed to meet with a group of traders in the near future. I trust that this will serve to reassure the Forum of the seriousness with which I and my Ministerial colleagues view this issue.

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