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*Haynes*



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
LONDON SW1P 3AJ

SECRETARY OF STATE  
FOR  
NORTHERN IRELAND

The Rt. Hon. William Whitelaw CH MC MP  
Secretary of State  
Home Office  
50 Queen Anne's Gate  
London  
SW1H 9AT

*Lh  
24/7*

24 July 1981

*Dear Willie,*

RAYNER SCRUTINY OF BENEFITS FOR UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE

Although the Rayner scrutiny team addressed themselves only to the situation in Great Britain, their report has fairly major implications for Northern Ireland and it may therefore be helpful if I add a footnote to the letter dated 17 July from Jim Prior and Patrick Jenkin. In doing so I will confine myself to the three major proposals.

Voluntary Registration

If registration for employment is to be voluntary in Great Britain there are no special factors in Northern Ireland which would justify the continuation of the present system of obligatory registration there. I should add, however, that I share the doubts about the level of voluntary registration assumed by the Rayner team, and these will have some bearing on the staff savings which will flow from this change. Because of the very high rate of unemployment in Northern Ireland I do not think it would be profitable in present circumstances to re-establish the unemployment review service which was discontinued several years ago. I propose instead to look for an enhancement of our efforts to counter fraud and abuse through the local DHSS network.

Fraud

I agree that there are problems about obtaining more soundly based estimates of the level of fraud, but Northern Ireland officials will be keeping in touch with developments on this front in Great Britain with a view to mounting a similar exercise. The increase which took place last September in the number of staff engaged on counter measures against fraud in Northern Ireland has proved highly cost-effective and a further expansion is already under active consideration.

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'One Office'

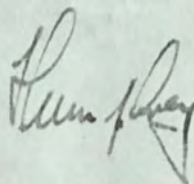
In Northern Ireland both benefits are already dealt with at one (DHSS) Office, although one officer does not normally deal with both. A limited experiment on unified handling had started before the Rayner study became available and the report on this has now been received. A more extensive trial is under consideration.

Conclusion

So far as Northern Ireland is concerned a great deal will depend on the outcome in Great Britain, especially on the question of voluntary registration, but I do not expect any significant problems in keeping the two systems in line. An additional factor is that we have recently received the report of a Rayner scrutiny team which has been looking at the employment service in Northern Ireland but its recommendations are not incompatible with the Great Britain study.

I am copying this to the recipients of our colleagues' letter.

Yours etc



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24 JUL 1981

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Item 01153

In Northern Ireland both parties  
have stated that they are not normally  
involved in political activities but  
the Party study papers and notes  
have been received. A note

Conclusion

It is noted that the Party's  
concerns in Great Britain are  
relatively unimportant but it is  
noted that the Party's  
concerns in Northern Ireland  
are more important and it is  
noted that the Party's  
concerns in Northern Ireland  
are more important and it is

I am copying this to the relevant  
departments for their information.

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