

CENTRAL PERSONNEL GROUP
NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

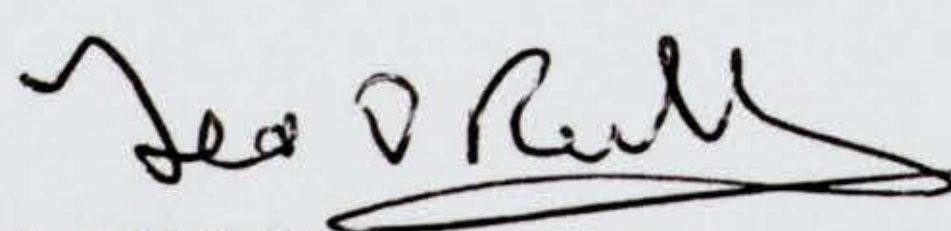
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cc: PS/PUS(B&L)
PS/Mr Semple
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Watkins
Mr Kelly (B&L)
Mr Leach
Mr O'Doherty
Mrs Flanagan

FROM: L O'REILLY
DATE: 28 OCTOBER 1998
TO: TONY MCCUSKER
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

WEARING OF POPPIES BY CIVIL SERVANTS

1. Your note of 27 October to Mrs Angus recorded the Secretary of State's wish to have robust defensive lines prepared for Ministers in case the wearing of poppies, or their sale in Government buildings, became an issue of controversy this year. I understand that Kirsten McFarlane will co-ordinate the inputs from CPG and DED on this issue.
2. PS/Mr Semple's minute of 23 October to Mr Pilling set out the NICS approach to this issue, which is consistent with FEC guidance to employers on the display of emblems in the workplace. I have enclosed (Annex A) lines for the Ministers to take if the general issues of the wearing of poppies by civil servants or their sale in Government buildings is raised. Ministers should also be aware of the current Fair Employment Commission Guidance on the display of emblems in the workplace, which is enclosed at Annex B.
3. If specific cases alleging inappropriate behaviour by individual civil servants are raised with Ministers they should state that such matters will be dealt with at the appropriate managerial level within the NI Civil Service.


L O'REILLY

LOR-16641

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POPPIES AND THE CIVIL SERVICE

LINE TO TAKE

1. Wearing of poppies by civil servants

Line to take

- ♦ The poppy is a nationally, indeed internationally, recognised symbol of remembrance for those who gave their lives in conflicts, and support for those still live with the scars of such conflicts.
- ♦ The poppy is not directly connected with the community strife in Northern Ireland and any attempt to regard or use it as a sectarian symbol here would be to disregard its true significance to peoples of all nationalities, cultures and creeds.
- ♦ Civil servants who wish to wear poppies at work in the period leading up to Remembrance Day can do so. Those who have worn them in previous years have done so with decorum and I am confident they will do so this year and in the future.

2. Sale of poppies in government offices

Line to take

- ♦ Poppies are made available for sale in Government offices (usually in reception/entrance areas) in the period leading up to Remembrance day.
- ♦ This recognises the important charitable work which proceeds from the sale of poppies goes to support. Other local and national charities are also given permission from time to time to raise funds through collections taken up in the entrance areas of Government offices.
- ♦ No pressure is put on staff to contribute to poppy or other charitable collections, nor to wear any emblem or badge that might be offered in return for a donation.

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3.

Complaints about the behaviour of individual civil servants or groups of civil servants

Line to take

- ♦ These matters which will be dealt with by Civil Service management using existing procedures for dealing with complaints raised about the behaviour of individual civil servants.

ANNEX B

FEC GUIDANCE ON EMBLEMS

Based on the current position, the Fair Employment Commission has provided the following by way of general guidance.

- Emblems which the Fair Employment Tribunal has specifically identified as having a 'sectarian significance', whether intended or not, eg. Rangers and Celtic football shirts, should be avoided.
- Emblems or displays which are directly linked to the community conflict over the past 30 years and/or local politics clearly have the potential to cause disruption to the good and harmonious working environment, eg. 'Ulster Says No' badges, Easter Lilies, Spirit of Drumcree badges, Bloody Sunday ribbons, Saoirse ribbons, orange lilies/regalia etc., and are best avoided.
- Emblems which do tend to distinguish one community from the other in Northern Ireland but are not directly connected with the community strife are unlikely to be regarded as creating an intimidating or hostile working environment as described in the Code of Practice. In this category would fall, marks of religious observance, crosses, crucifixes, ashes, pioneer pins, Christian Union badges, fáinnes, as well as poppies and shamrock, when worn with decorum and at the appropriate period.

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HCS/910/98

FROM: PS/MR SEMPLE
23 OCTOBER 1998

cc PS/Secretary of State (B&L)
PS/Mr Murphy (DFP,B&L)
PS/Mr Ingram (DED,B&L)
Mr Jeffrey
Mr Hunter
Mr Shannon
Mr McCusker
Mr Warner

PS/MR PILLING (B&L)

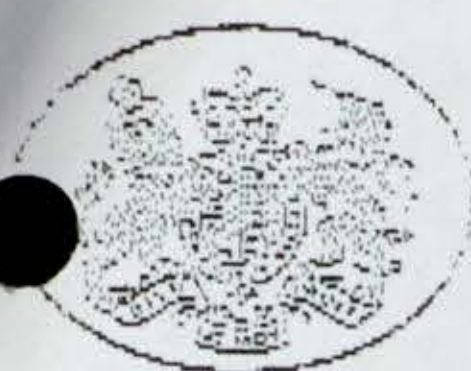
REMEMBRANCE DAY - WEARING OF POPPIES

1. In PS/Secretary of State's minute of 13 October advice was sought on whether there is a policy within the NIO and the NICS on the wearing of poppies by civil servants in the period preceding Remembrance Day, and whether there are any plans to issue guidance on this issue.
2. The wearing of poppies by civil servants in Northern Ireland has not created difficulties or controversy in the past. Poppies are made available for sale within government buildings (usually in foyer areas) for those who wish to purchase them. Staff who wish to wear poppies at work can also do so in the days leading up to Remembrance day and a remembrance service has been held each year in Parliament Buildings. The service will be held on Wednesday 11 November this year.
3. Beyond these arrangements, there is no formal policy statement on the wearing of poppies by civil servants and there are no plans to issue any guidance on the subject this year. Indeed the issuing of such guidance to staff, which might cover matters such as where and when poppies should be worn, would most likely serve only to generate controversy and

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division within the Civil Service and beyond, in an area where staff have behaved sensibly in the past. Obviously if evidence of abuse were to be uncovered, then action would be taken in line with the Civil Service Code of Ethics. There is currently no such evidence of abuse, complaint or controversy.

4. Mr Semple is strongly of the view that no action should be initiated unless there is compelling evidence of abuse.

DAVID CRABBE

☎ 28146

Mr Angus

I agree. This ~~was~~ sentence was visited by Mr Semple's office. When I spoke to David Crabbe last week, I said the correct line was ~~was~~ that any complaints should be dealt with

Mr O'Reilly

Noted

Jan 2/11

The Code of Ethics is about values, propriety and issues of conscience. I don't see a role for it in relation to the wearing of poppies. Do you? Action would be taken in line with the Poy & Laidlaw of Service Code. Ethics would only enter into it if the wearing of poppies could be shown to breach the impartiality of the Civil Service

2.11

using existing procedures for dealing with complaints raised about the behaviour of individual civil servants

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