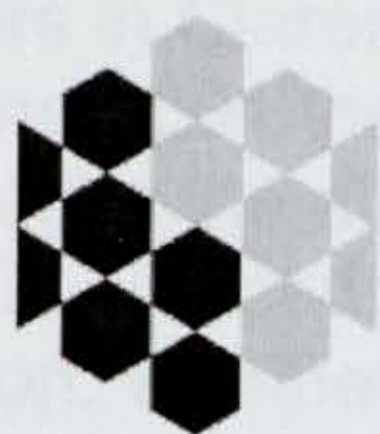




Department for

**Regional
Development**

www.drdni.gov.uk

Memo

From: David Sterling
Deputy Secretary

Your ref:

Our ref: DRDPEFO 201/03

Tel: (028) 90541180

cc: Stephen Quinn
Rosalie Flanagan
Stephen Grimason
Wendy Johnston
Tanya McWilliams
Anne Breen
Paddy Cullen

Date: 11 November 2003

To: John Spellar MP

ARMISTICE DAY – ENQUIRY FROM IAN PAISLEY JNR RE ALLEGED NON-OBSERVANCE OF TWO MINUTE SILENCE

Issue: Enquiry from Ian Paisley Jnr alleging that DRD staff in County Hall in Ballymena were prevented from observing the Two-Minute Silence.

Timing: **Immediate:** there is a possibility this issue may attract media attention.

Presentational Issues Issues surrounding the observance of Remembrance Day are particularly sensitive and Ian Paisley Jnr may seek publicity from this particular case. The Newsletter front page focused on a number of Remembrance Day issues today.

Recommendation: That you note the circumstances surrounding this, and the line to take in the event of any enquiries.

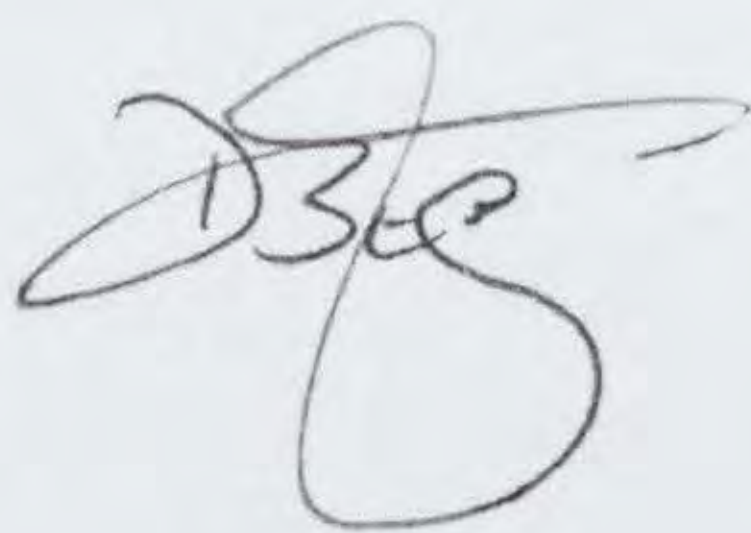
Background

1. No central guidance has been issued in recent years on the observance of the 2 minute silence on 11 November. To the best of our knowledge, central guidance was last issued in respect of Armistice Day in 1998.

2. DRD Headquarters in Clarence Court has not formally observed the silence since 1999 – in 2000 and 2001 the 11th of November fell on a Saturday or Sunday and last year it was decided in the absence of any central instructions or guidance, not to formally observe it. Instead it was left to individual members of staff to decide, at their own discretion, whether or not to observe the silence. In the absence of any central guidance this has been our policy in the past two years.

Today's Incident

3. In response to a phone call early this morning from a member of staff in County Hall, Ballymena, a member of staff in DRD Personnel Division advised that no instructions or guidance had been received on the matter. As a result Ballymena County Hall did not observe the silence.
4. Shortly after 12 o'clock Ian Paisley Jnr called DRD Personnel Division complaining that his lines were 'red hot' with callers from County Hall complaining about the non-observance and saying that an instruction had been issued from Clarence Court to the effect that there should not be observance.
5. Having investigated the circumstances we have now contacted Ian Paisley Jnr and confirmed that no instruction was issued to the effect that staff should not observe the Two-Minute Silence.
6. We have now advised Ian Paisley Jnr of this and he appears to have been satisfied with our explanation, though we cannot be sure he will not raise the issue elsewhere, especially given the profile and sensitivity of this issue today. In the event of any enquiry our lines to take will be:
 - DRD did not issue any instructions to staff to the effect that they should not observe a two minute silence as an Act of Remembrance.
 - It is clearly a personal decision whether to observe the Two Minute Silence on Remembrance Day and DRD fully respects the right of anyone who wishes to do so.
 - DRD circulated an invitation to all staff to attend a Remembrance Service in Parliament Buildings.



DAVID STERLING