

DRAFT

FROM: IAN PEARSON, MP

DATE: [] NOVEMBER 2003

TO: SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND

ISSUE: OBSERVANCE OF A PERIOD OF SILENCE IN
GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS ON 11 NOVEMBER 2003.

TIMING: ROUTINE

ACTION: TO NOTIFY JEFFREY DONALDSON, MP THAT NICS POLICY
ON OBSERVANCE OF THE PERIOD OF SILENCE HAS NOT
CHANGED.

Background

1. The observance of a period of silence on 11 November of each year, that is, in addition to a period of silence on Remembrance Sunday, stems from a campaign begun by the Royal British Legion in 1998 - which was the occasion of the 80th anniversary of the end of the First World War. Since then, the Prime Minister has personally strongly supported the observance of both Remembrance Sunday and a two-minute silence on 11 November.
2. The Government's line has been to ensure that Remembrance Sunday and a two-minute silence on 11 November are observed in tandem, with full dignity, respect and honour. It is, and remains, however, a personal decision whether to observe a period of silence on Remembrance Sunday or at any other time.
3. The NICS departments, like those of the Home Civil Service, have been advised to leave it to staff to decide, on an individual basis, whether or not they wish to observe a period of silence on 11 November. This has been, and remains, the position.

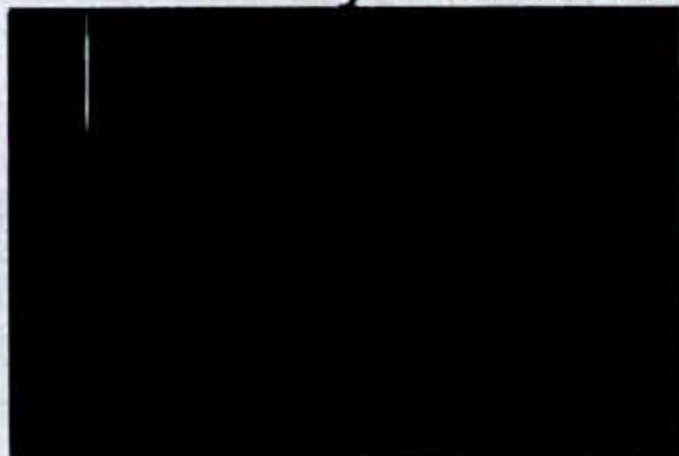
Advice

4. The policy of the Northern Ireland Office and the Northern Ireland Departments has been to leave it to staff to decide, on an individual basis, whether or not to observe a period of silence on 11 November and to facilitate those who wish to do so; that was the situation that obtained on 11 November 2003. Aside from a short Service of Remembrance in Parliament Buildings at 10.45 am on that day - to which all civil servants working in the Belfast area were invited - no other arrangements, formal or informal, were in place.
5. A draft reply for the Secretary of State's signature is attached for consideration.

IAN PEARSON

DRAFT

Mr Jeffrey Donaldson, MP



[] November 2003

You wrote recently raising the matter of the observance of a period of silence on 11 November 2003 in the Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) and in the departments/agencies of the Northern Ireland Civil Service. This was in response to queries by a number of civil servants who had contacted you directly about this matter.

The situation that obtained in the departments on 11 November 2003 was that civil servants were free to take time out to observe a period of silence at 11.00 am if they, as individuals, wished to do so. This applied in all civil service locations across Northern Ireland and it fell to local management to notify their staff accordingly. Such has been the policy followed by the Northern Ireland Civil Service since 1998.

In line with the practice of previous years, there was no formality attached to the observance of a period of silence on 11 November 2003, such as some form of signal indicating the commencement and ending of it. Further, civil servants working in the Belfast area were also free, again if they wished to do so, to leave their place of work and attend the short Service of Remembrance that is traditionally held in Parliament Buildings commencing at 10.45 am on 11 November every year (provided that date is a working day).

In response to your specific query, therefore, I can advise there has been no change in policy, either on the part of the Northern Ireland Office (Belfast) or by the Northern Ireland departments, in relation to the observance of a period of silence on 11 November 2003.

Yours sincerely

[SoS]