

FROM: J G TAYLOR
Department of Finance & Personnel
Rosepark

4 November 1993

cc: Secretary
Assistant Secretaries Establishment
(DHSS copy by fax)
Mr Wood, Director of Information
Service - by fax

Mr Megahey

TO: PS/MR FELL - BY FAX

NIC-ICTU PEACE RALLY - 3 NOVEMBER 1993

1. All Departments were advised by telephone on Monday 1 November that the rally was taking place in Belfast City Centre at 1.00 pm and that absences during core time should be handled with discretion and sensitivity at local level and at most should be treated as flexi-leave as opposed to annual leave.
2. Senior personnel officers in all Departments have been contacted this morning and there are no reports of any difficulties arising as far as the release of staff is concerned or the period of absence. The rally concluded before 1.30 pm and while there was traffic disruption it is unlikely that any staff returning to work in the Greater Belfast areas encroached to any significant extent on core time working which normally starts at 2 pm.
3. DHSS took a corporate decision that all managers should be advised to adopt a sympathetic and flexible approach. In some offices of East Division SSA this was interpreted as absences during core time being counted against flexi-leave. This is in line with the central guidance issued although a more stringent approach than that taken elsewhere.
4. In response to telephone enquiries from the press we should simply say that when the peace rally was first mooted managers were advised to adopt a flexible approach to staff absences whilst maintaining essential services. Local managers are best placed to take decisions in these matters: central intervention, other than the guidance which was given, would be entirely inappropriate.

It is not thought advisable to attempt to justify a divergence in approach by means of a Press Statement.

J G TAYLOR