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Miss O'Boyle

Sir Robin Janvrin, CB, KCVO,
Private Secretary To HM The Queen
Buckingham Palace
London

Floors.

23 February 1999

Dear Sir Robin

We have announced our intention to put in place all the legislative preparations necessary for devolution in Northern Ireland by 10 March, even though it seems that the earliest date at which it could be brought about politically is rather later than that.

I am writing in connection with one aspect of this. Bills of the Northern Ireland Assembly (like those of the Scottish Parliament) will require Royal Assent. The Northern Ireland Act 1998 (section 49) permits provision by Order in Council about **Letters Patent** for signifying such Assent. A draft of such an Order is attached.

We have sought, with one eye to the Northern Ireland political context, to use simpler and more contemporary language than in Letters Patent associated with Bills of the Westminster Parliament. Our draft has been discussed with the Privy Council Office, who are content.

The mechanism for submitting Letters Patent will be similar to that for Westminster Bills, except that the Office of the Clerk to the Crown in Northern Ireland rather than the Crown Office will have responsibility for preparing them and sealing them with a Wafer Great Seal of Northern Ireland. Letters Patent will continue to be drawn up in advance of a Bill's being passed and close liaison will be maintained at all times by the Clerk of the Crown's Office to ensure the timely submission of Bills. Inevitably, the need to approve Assembly Bills will create additional work



for your staff and for Her Majesty, but we are trying to ensure that the process will be smooth.

The Secretary of State would be grateful if you would lay before The Queen the draft of the new Letters Patent. If Her Majesty is pleased to approve them, we hope to submit the Order for making at the meeting of the Privy Council on 10 March.

It would be most helpful if you were able to let me have a reply to this letter by 2 March.

Copies of this letter go for information to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, the Lord President of the Council and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

Yours sincerely
David H. Perry
N P PERRY