

MEETING WITH MR MOLYNEAUX: DEFENSIVE BRIEFING

Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs

1. The present position is that the Procedure Committee is expected to continue consideration of the composition of a Northern Ireland Committee at its meeting on 24 November. We are not clear whether, by tomorrow, it will be in a position to make recommendations. If it is, the Government would not expect to make any immediate announcements but will want to consider the recommendations and how they might be implemented. [NOT FOR USE: We want to avoid complications over the handling of the Prime Minister's meeting with the Taoiseach next month.] The Prime Minister has already told Mr Molyneux, on 18 October, that the Procedure Committee was likely to recommend in favour and that the Government would be able to accept this.

Legislative Procedures

2. On legislation, the Prime Minister might develop what he said to Mr Molyneux on 18 October to the effect that -

- A number of Bills will apply to Northern Ireland, to one degree or another, in the new Session;
- Ministers are content in principle for as many Bills as possible to be applied to Northern Ireland provided that this would not create handling difficulties or create problems of interpretation or consistency;
- Each Bill is examined on its merits;
- Because there is a lack of uniformity between the law and practice in Great Britain and Northern Ireland there will continue to be requirement for Orders in Council on a number of issues this Session.
- Sir Patrick Mayhew would welcome a discussion on these issues with Mr Molyneux.