

(210 6549)

FIRST REPORT

HOUSE OF COMMONS

SESSION 1993-94

FIRST REPORT FROM
THE SELECT COMMITTEE ON PROCEDURE

Session 1993-94

THE SELECT COMMITTEE SYSTEM
AFFECTING NORTHERN IRELAND

Together with the
Proceedings of the Committee
relating to the Report

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed
1 December 1993

[To be printed on Monday 6 December 1993 as HC 73]

(9002 012)

Friday 4 December 1992

Procedure, - Ordered , That a Select Committee of not more than seventeen Members be appointed to consider the practice and procedure of the House in the conduct of public business, and to make recommendations.

That five be the quorum of the Committee.

That the Committee have power to send for persons, papers and records, to sit notwithstanding any Adjournment of the House, to adjourn from place to place and to report from time to time.

That Mr Tony Banks, Mr Paul Channon, Sir Peter Emery, Sir John Hannam, Mr Charles Hendry, Mr James Hill, Mr Eric Illsley, Mr Gordon McMaster, Lady Olga Maitland, Mr Raymond S. Robertson, Rachel Squire, Mr Paul Tyler and Mr David Winnick be members of the Committee.

That these Orders be Standing Orders of the House until the end of this Parliament.

Wednesday 9 December 1992

Sir Peter Emery was called to the Chair.

Thursday 15 July 1993

Mr Paul Channon discharged; Mr Andrew MacKay added.

Monday 19 July 1993

Sir Michael Marshall added.

Ordered by The House of Commons to be printed
1 December 1992

Printed on Monday 6 December 1992 at HC 711

FIRST REPORT

THE SELECT COMMITTEE SYSTEM AFFECTING NORTHERN IRELAND

The Procedure Committee has agreed to the following Report:

1. The Procedure Committee has on two occasions considered the need for a Select Committee to monitor the work of the Northern Ireland Office. In 1990 the Committee reported that it was "anomalous from a practical point of view that no separate Select Committee exists to oversee the affairs of Northern Ireland".¹ As that report stated "It should be remembered that the only reason given by the Procedure Committee in 1978 for its decision not to recommend the creation of a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs was the continuing uncertainty over the future constitutional arrangements for the Province"².
2. The 1990 report went on to state "It will be clear that we see a case for bringing the Northern Ireland Office formally within the system of scrutiny by Select Committees"³ and added "we do not believe that the uncertainties over the future administration of the Province can be allowed to preclude indefinitely the establishment of proper arrangements for the scrutiny by the House of the Northern Ireland Department"⁴. However, the Committee accepted the advice of the then Secretary of State in 1990 that appointment of such a committee at that time "whilst attractive in principle, could cause difficulties for the initiative launched by the Secretary of State"⁵.
3. The Committee see nothing to add or subtract from their previous views. The appointment of a committee must rest with the decision of the Government to propose to the House its appointment and its terms of reference. The only fact that the Committee has needed to review was the number of Members on such a Committee if it was to be appointed. The Procedure Committee had already noted that the current formula used by the Committee of Selection for determining the number of places on Select Committees would need to be amended to take into account the special political factors which apply to Northern Ireland.
4. It would seem sensible that all the Northern Ireland political parties represented in the House should be represented on the Committee. So, if the Government consider that this is an opportune time to establish a Select Committee on Northern Ireland Affairs, considering the present political balance in the House, it could consist of either 13 or 15 Members. Either number would be procedurally acceptable. The Committee meanwhile makes no comment or recommendation on the question of timing, which would be beyond the Committee's terms of reference.

¹Second Report 1989-90 - The Working of the Select Committee System - HC 19-I - paragraph 274

²ibid paragraph 274

³ibid paragraph 277

⁴ibid paragraph 278

⁵ibid paragraph 277

PROCEEDINGS OF THE COMMITTEE RELATING TO THE REPORT

WEDNESDAY 1 DECEMBER 1993

Members present:

Sir Peter Emery, in the Chair

Mr. Tony Banks
Sir John Hannam
Mr. Charles Hendry
Mr. James Hill
Mr. Eric Illsley
Mr. Andrew MacKay

Lady Olga Maitland
Sir Michael Marshall
Mr. Raymond S. Robertson
Rachel Squire
Mr. Paul Tyler
Mr. David Winnick

The Committee deliberated.

Draft Report [The Select Committee System affecting Northern Ireland], proposed by the Chairman, brought up and read.

Ordered, That the draft Report be read a second time, paragraph by paragraph.

Paragraph 1 read.

Question put, That the paragraph stand part of the Report.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 8
Sir John Hannam
Mr. Charles Hendry
Mr. James Hill
Mr. Andrew MacKay
Lady Olga Maitland
Sir Michael Marshall
Mr. Raymond S. Robertson
Mr. Paul Tyler

Noes, 4
Mr. Tony Banks
Mr. Eric Illsley
Rachel Squire
Mr. David Winnick

Paragraph 2 read and agreed to.

Paragraph 3 read as follows:

"This part of the 1990 report concluded "we consider that the Government cannot postpone dealing with this matter for very much longer and we will keep the position under review" (ibid para 278).

Question, That the paragraph stand part of the Report, put and negatived.

Paragraph 4 (now paragraph 3) read and agreed to.

Paragraph 5 (now paragraph 4) read and amended.

Question put, That the paragraph, as amended, stand part of the Report.
The Committee divided.

Ayes, 8
Sir John Hannam
Mr. Charles Hendry
Mr. James Hill
Mr. Andrew MacKay
Lady Olga Maitland
Sir Michael Marshall
Mr. Raymond S. Robertson
Mr. Paul Tyler

Noes, 4
Mr. Tony Banks
Mr. Eric Illsley
Rachel Squire
Mr. David Winnick

Question put, That the Report, as amended, be the First Report of the
Committee to the House.

The Committee divided.

Ayes, 7
Sir John Hannam
Mr. Charles Hendry
Mr. James Hill
Mr. Andrew MacKay
Lady Olga Maitland
Sir Michael Marshall
Mr. Raymond S. Robertson

Noes, 4
Mr. Tony Banks
Mr. Eric Illsley
Rachel Squire
Mr. David Winnick

Ordered, That the Chairman do make the Report to the House.

The Committee deliberated.

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[Adjourned to a time and place to be fixed by the Chairman.]