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CONFIDENTIAL

9 SEP 1982

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PS/SIR EMART BELL - MUFAX

cc: Mr Blatherwick - M
Mr J A D Kennedy - M
Miss Davies - M
Dr Hayes - M
Mr Abbott
Mr Russell - M
Miss Owens - M



TREATMENT OF ASSEMBLY ABSTENTIONISTS

1. At yesterday's meeting Mr Abbott undertook to ascertain how the Government and the Commons treat Mr Owen Carron MP with regard to the provision of papers. This note sets out the current position.

2. The status of an MP who has not taken the oath (the equivalent of an elected Assembly member who has not signed the roll of the Assembly) is set out clearly in ERSKINE MAY (18th Edition), Chapter Xiv, p.264:

"Although until he has taken the oath a Member may not sit and vote, he may vacate his seat by the acceptance of the Chiltern Hundreds and is entitled to all the other privileges of a Member (but not to his salary), being regarded, both by the House and by the laws, as qualified to serve, until some other disqualification has been shown to exist."

3. In the case of supplying papers to Mr Carron the Secretary of State decided that, so far as Government papers were concerned, his Private Office would write to the MP telling him that we would send him all papers which are sent to other NI MPs unless he wrote to say that he did not want them. Mr Carron did not reply, so that he currently receives all the Government publications which are sent out to all other NI MPs.

4. So far as publications of the House of Commons are concerned, ie Order Papers, Hansards, Select Committee Reports and the like, I understand that these documents are not posted off to Mr Carron.

Apparently all Commons publications are available to Members within the precincts of the House but they are ^{not} posted to Members at home addresses unless specifically requested. Mr Carron has never made such a request.

5. In the case of abstentionist Assembly members, I should have thought that the ERSKINE MAY ruling was applicable and that it might be put to such members in the same way as it was to Mr Carron. However, in this instance, because we are trying to persuade abstentionists of the advantages of participating in the Assembly we may wish to include publications of the Assembly in the package on offer.



B A BLACKWELL

8 September 1982