



*Mr Edmund
to see for information
SR 6.11*

*Thanks. Mr Blair's
we was changed yesterday.
please to advise was for
somewhere else?*

cc Ms O'Neill
Mrs Campbell
file

*A
5/11*

5 November 1997

To Mr Gibson

From Georgina Campbell

To Paul Rogers - Employment

*A 2575798 - Eq. mem.
(if necessary)
SR 6.11*

EARLY DAY MOTION NO 376: REMEMBRANCE DAY POPPIES

1. This Motion has been put down by Messrs Ross, Trimble and Thompson. We have been asked to provide a short line to take and a background note, cleared by the Minister, to Parliamentary Section by close of play today.
2. I am enclosing a draft submission to the Minister for your signature. I have E mailed this to Joan.
3. You may be aware that the Secretary of State has asked the Minister to issue a press release on this subject today. I enclose the draft version which has been agreed with the Minister and with Bob Cooper. As yet we have not received a final copy.
4. According to the latest monitoring returns, the composition of the workforce at the Coates Viyella shirt factory is 54.5% Catholic and 45.5% Protestant.
5. Just in case, like me, you need a reminder of the purpose of Early Day Motions, they are put down by MP's to express their views on certain issues. Other MP's can express their support by adding their names to the statement. They are rarely discussed in the House, but are read out by the Speaker during the "Business of the House" and a short statement is read out giving the Government "line to take".
6. I am happy to discuss.

GEORGINA CAMPBELL



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

An Equal Opportunities Organisation

~~FIVE~~

DRAFT

- approval phoned to Jill Heron.
@ 5/11.

5th November 1997

**STATEMENT BY ADAM INGRAM, MINISTER OF STATE ON THE WEARING OF
POPPIES IN THE WORKPLACE**

Adam Ingram, Minister of State, has today commented on the dispute at the Coats Viyella plant over the wearing of poppies in the workplace.

The Minister said: "The best advice is that expressed by the Fair Employment Commission who have specific expertise in the areas of employee/employer relationships.

"The comments made by Bob Cooper, Chief Executive of the FEC, are most relevant and are based on a commonsense view of the issue that the respectful wearing of poppies at the relevant periods is unlikely to be offensive or to cause apprehension.

"The FEC advice to employers is that it is acceptable to make a distinction between emblems associated with local politics and those that reflect events not perceived to be related to community conflict.

"Employers must therefore take into account the nature of the event and ensure that no attempt is made to use the wearing of an emblem as some form of statement or that it should be politicised in any way.

"The statutory Code of Practice on Fair Employment contains detailed recommendations which employers and others should follow. Included in the Code is a recommendation on promoting

a good and harmonious working environment by prohibiting the display of flags and emblems which are likely to give offence."

5 November 1997

cc PS SoS (B&L)
Secretary
Mr O'Doherty (o/r)
Ms O'Neill
Mrs Campbell
file

To PS Mr Ingram (DED&L)

From David Gibson
DED

EARLY DAY MOTION NO 376: REMEMBRANCE DAY POPPIES

Introduction

1. The following Early Day Motion has been put down by Messrs William Ross, David Trimble and William Thompson:

"That this House deplores the decision of the management of the Coates Viyella shirt factory in Londonderry to send home four employees for wearing Remembrance Day poppies; regards the acceptance of this decision by Mr Bob Cooper, Chairman of the Fair Employment Commission, as an abuse of this influence and an attempt to deprive the people of Northern Ireland of the right to express their grief at the loss the nation suffered in the defence of freedom and democracy and their pride in those who made the supreme sacrifice; recalls that the sums raised are used for the relief of hardship of dependants and the easing of suffering of those who were maimed, crippled and blinded in the dreadful conflicts of the two World Wars; and urges the Government to urgently consider legislative changes to prevent further abuse."

Recommendation

2. A line to take and background note is attached for the Minister's approval.

D GIBSON

EARLY DAY MOTION NO 376: REMEMBRANCE DAY POPPIES

LINE TO TAKE

The Statutory Code of Practice on Fair Employment includes a recommendation on promoting a "good and harmonious working environment" by prohibiting the display of flags and emblems which are likely to cause offence. It is for employers to judge, in the light of the prevailing circumstances, and with the advice of the Fair Employment Commission, whether the wearing of an emblem is being used to make some form of political statement, and to act accordingly. Government is content with the adequacy of current guidance available to employers on this issue.

BACKGROUND NOTE

The fair employment legislation does not make it unlawful to display or wear poppies or any other emblems. However the Fair Employment Code of Practice places a duty on employers to "promote a good and harmonious working environment" by prohibiting the display of materials etc which are likely to give offence to a particular group of employees.

The Fair Employment Code of Practice complements the Fair Employment Act (NI) 1989. It provides guidance to employers and others on their duties and obligations under the legislation. The Fair Employment Commission (FEC) provides advice to employers on the interpretation of the Code of Practice. Failure to comply with the Code will not render an employer liable to proceedings, however this may be taken into account by the Fair Employment Tribunal in adjudicating on any case against a company.

The Code of Practice allows employers to judge, in the light of the prevailing circumstances, and with the advice of the Fair Employment Commission, whether the wearing of an emblem is being used to make some form of political statement, and to act accordingly.

In the case of Coates Viyella, the FEC has adopted a commonsense approach and has advised that the respectful wearing of poppies at the relevant periods, is unlikely to cause offence. It is understood that the company has permitted the wearing of poppies for a limited period around Armistice Day. Management has "sent home" a number of workers who have chosen to wear poppies prior to the start of the designated period.