

**CENTRAL PERSONNEL GROUP**  
NORTHERN IRELAND CIVIL SERVICE

cc Mr Gibson  
Mr Hagan  
✓ aa.  
30/10


CONFIDENTIAL

cc: PS/PUS(B&L)  
PS/Mr Semple  
Mr Jeffrey  
Mr Watkins  
Mr Kelly (B&L)  
Mr Leach  
Mr O'Doherty  
Mrs Flanagan

FROM: L O'REILLY  
DATE: 28 OCTOBER 1998  
TO: TONY MCCUSKER  
CENTRAL SECRETARIAT

WEARING OF POPPIES BY CIVIL SERVANTS

1. Your note of 27 October to Mrs Angus recorded the Secretary of State's wish to have robust defensive lines prepared for Ministers in case the wearing of poppies, or their sale in Government buildings, became an issue of controversy this year. I understand that Kirsten McFarlane will co-ordinate the inputs from CPG and DED on this issue.
2. PS/Mr Semple's minute of 23 October to Mr Pilling set out the NICS approach to this issue, which is consistent with FEC guidance to employers on the display of emblems in the workplace. I have enclosed (Annex A) lines for the Ministers to take if the general issues of the wearing of poppies by civil servants or their sale in Government buildings is raised. Ministers should also be aware of the current Fair Employment Commission Guidance on the display of emblems in the workplace, which is enclosed at Annex B.
3. If specific cases alleging inappropriate behaviour by individual civil servants are raised with Ministers they should state that such matters will be dealt with at the appropriate managerial level within the NI Civil Service.

  
L O'REILLY

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CONFIDENTIALANNEX APOPPIES AND THE CIVIL SERVICELINE TO TAKE1. Wearing of poppies by civil servantsLine to take

- ♦ The poppy is a nationally, indeed internationally, recognised symbol of remembrance for those who gave their lives in conflicts, and support for those still live with the scars of such conflicts.
- ♦ The poppy is not directly connected with the community strife in Northern Ireland and any attempt to regard or use it as a sectarian symbol here would be to disregard its true significance to peoples of all nationalities, cultures and creeds.
- ♦ Civil servants who wish to wear poppies at work in the period leading up to Remembrance Day can do so. Those who have worn them in previous years have done so with decorum and I am confident they will do so this year and in the future.

2. Sale of poppies in government officesLine to take

- ♦ Poppies are made available for sale in Government offices (usually in reception/entrance areas) in the period leading up to Remembrance day.
- ♦ This recognises the important charitable work which proceeds from the sale of poppies goes to support. Other local and national charities are also given permission from time to time to raise funds through collections taken up in the entrance areas of Government offices.
- ♦ No pressure is put on staff to contribute to poppy or other charitable collections, nor to wear any emblem or badge that might be offered in return for a donation.



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3. Complaints about the behaviour of individual civil servants or groups of civil servants

Line to take

- These matters which will be dealt with by Civil Service management using existing procedures for dealing with complaints raised about the behaviour of individual civil servants.

## FEC GUIDANCE ON EMBLEMS

*Based on the current position, the Fair Employment Commission has provided the following by way of general guidance.*

- Emblems which the Fair Employment Tribunal has specifically identified as having a 'sectarian significance', whether intended or not, eg. Rangers and Celtic football shirts, should be avoided.
- Emblems or displays which are directly linked to the community conflict over the past 30 years and/or local politics clearly have the potential to cause disruption to the good and harmonious working environment, eg. 'Ulster Says No' badges, Easter Lilies, Spirit of Drumcree badges, Bloody Sunday ribbons, Saoirse ribbons, orange lilies/regalia etc., and are best avoided.
- Emblems which do tend to distinguish one community from the other in Northern Ireland but are not directly connected with the community strife are unlikely to be regarded as creating an intimidating or hostile working environment as described in the Code of Practice. In this category would fall, marks of religious observance, crosses, crucifixes, ashes, pioneer pins, Christian Union badges, fáinnes, as well as poppies and shamrock, when worn with decorum and at the appropriate period.