

E.R.

PS/Secretary of State (B)

BOUNDARY COMMISSION FOR NORTHERN IRELAND: PUBLICATION OF REVISED RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

1. This note supplements a formal letter (below) from the Commission to the Secretary of State by summarising the main points of the attached document which will be published on Thursday 27 August. Copies, embargoed until that date, are also being circulated to NI Political Parties, Westminster Party spokesmen etc.

Background

2. The Commission published Provisional Recommendations on 8 January 1980 for 17 parliamentary constituencies in place of the present 12. Having received representations, the Commission arranged for the holding of Local Inquiries into all their recommendations in November/December last.

Revised Recommendations

3. The Commission have now decided to accept all the recommendations of the Assistant Commissioners (Barristers) who conducted these Inquiries. In accordance with the provisions of the House of Commons (Redistribution of Seats) Acts these Revised Recommendations will be published and a period of one month allowed for further representations.

4. While adhering to a total of 17 constituencies the Commission have decided to make some minor changes to the boundaries of 5 of them. These changes are set out on the map flagged within the attached document.

5. Unionist politicians may express disappointment that the Commission have not accepted their arguments for a greater number of seats. Otherwise the Revised Recommendations are unlikely to be controversial. Indeed most of the boundary changes were suggested by the Commission itself, in a public statement prior to the Local Inquiries.

Further Progress

6. Having considered any representations arising from their Revised Recommendations the Commission will then proceed under their statutory remit to make recommendations as regards the distribution of the 78 NI Assembly seats amongst the 17 proposed

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parliamentary constituencies. This is largely a mathematical exercise, but the results have to be published and representations considered.

7. The Commission hope to present a final report to the Secretary of State on both parliamentary constituencies and assembly seats early in 1982.

8. The Commission's final recommendations may be put into effect, with or without modification, by an Order in Council, though they do not come into operation until the next General Election.

Summary

- (a) The Secretary of State is invited to take note of the publication of revised proposals; and
- (b) PS/S of S(B) is asked to acknowledge receipt of the formal letter to the Secretary of State.

R. Miller

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20 August 1981

cc PS/S of S (L)
PS/Mr Alison (L & B)
PS/Mr Butler (L & B)
PS/Mr Mitchell (L & B)
PS/Mr Patten (L & B)
PS/Lord Elton (L & B)
PS/PUS (L & B)
PS/Mr Bell
Mr Jamieson
Mr Moriarty
Mr Wyatt
Mr Smartt (OIR)
Mr Chesterton
Mr Blatherwick
Mr Bohill