



30 August 1996

To: Mrs Doreen Brown  
Central Secretariat  
Stormont Castle

From: R Gamble

**THREATENED BOYCOTT OF SOUTHERN SUPPLIERS**

We spoke on Wednesday about the threat by an anonymous group of Protestant businessmen to "terminate all contracts with suppliers in the Republic" unless the Nationalist boycott of Protestant businesses on border areas is ended. You asked what the DED line on this would be.

There are a number of issues tied up in this situation, such as the morality and motivation of such action and its likely effectiveness in achieving its declared aim (the ending of the Nationalist boycott); and the advisability of Government making any kind of public response to threats by people who do not identify themselves. All of that is for others, however. The DED line, based on purely economic considerations, is as follows:

- It is Government's policy to encourage more trade between Northern Ireland and the Republic because it believes that free and open trade will maximise the economic benefits to both partners and will improve economic welfare for everyone.
- Any restriction on free and open trade such as the threatened boycott of Southern suppliers is to be deplored. It will do economic damage to both trading partners, North as well as South.

cc - co-op with NI briefs file - / Ep pages on briefing file for line to take if necessary.  
co-op with ROI/cross border trade  
cc. 3184/95

cc Secretary  
Mr Gibson  
Mr Robinson  
Mr Buckland  
Mr MacCann  
Mr Templeton  
Mr Burrows  
Also P Sump (MO) FAX

Mr T.M. → Mrs Baker Pl.  
These cuttings below info so on the file, pro tem.

3/9/96

Mr 30/8



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- It could lead to retaliation by business people in the Republic, which would only compound the economic damage to both sides. [Incidentally, it is one of the problems of not knowing who the Protestant businessmen are that we cannot guess what their contracts are worth and whether withdrawal of them might be serious enough to provoke a reaction in the South.]
- Business people should make their business decisions on the basis of economics, not politics. If they choose uneconomic options for political reasons, they are hurting their own business and endangering the jobs and prosperity of those who work for them.

Trade between NI and the Republic has increased in recent years, to the mutual benefit of both. And indeed, NI's sales to the ROI have been growing faster than the ROI's sales to NI (NI sales up 58% in the period 1993 to 1995, ROI sales up 17%). A "trade war" would threaten this.

- The boycott threat is misguided and self-damaging. It should be dropped.

*R Gamble*

**R GAMBLE**



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FROM: PAUL SKITT  
DUTY OFFICER STORMONT HOUSE  
22 AUGUST 1996

cc: Press Office - B  
(Simon Burrowes on duty at time)  
PS/Michael Ancram (B&L) - B  
PS/Sir John Wheeler (B&L) - B  
PS/Baroness Denton (DED,DANI&L) - B

Mr Ken Lindsay (B&L) - B  
Secretary of State's Office

BOYCOTT OF PROTESTANT BUSINESSES

1. Further to our telephone conversation on the subject to yourself, Simon Burrowes, Richard Lemon and PS/Sir John Wheeler, this is a note for the record.
2. An anonymous male caller purporting to represent the Protestant Businessmen affected, requested I bring the following information to the attention of the Secretary of State or Michael Ancram.
3. His message was that the boycott of Protestant businesses by "the Nationalist Community" was ongoing and spiralling, resulting in some cases 50% or more lost turnover.
4. Further he wished to highlight recent developments in that groups or a group of the businessmen affected had met and while they did not wish to take action against Catholics in their communities, decided that some counter-action was necessary. To this end, they decided to boycott supplies of materials etc from businesses based in the Republic of Ireland.
5. Apparently the Republican paramilitaries got wind of this decision, and as a counter measure had threatened Catholic employees of the Protestant Businessmen demanding that they should give up their jobs. Moreover, simultaneously, they threatened the Protestant Businessmen that action would be taken against them if they did not make these Catholic employees redundant. The

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businessmen had, of course, no desire to make them redundant. If any redundancies were necessary, they had no intention of being discriminatory.

6. The crux of the matter was that the Businessmen concerned could foresee that, following such discriminatory action, forced on them, would result in litigation against them under employment legislation.

7. The anonymous caller, who refused to give his name or telephone number stated, when pressed, that a follow-up contact would be Bob Cooper of the Fair Employment Agency with whom a representative or representatives of the businessmen concerned had had a meeting on the subject, recently.

8. A further contact was quoted as Mr Cedric Wilson of The Forum who had conducted a survey on the effect of the business boycott.

9. The areas where the boycott is prevalent at present, is the Clogher Valley and extensively in Counties Fermanagh and Armagh.

10. Apparently Century Newspapers (the Newsletter etc) are likely to run a story on the subject soon.

[signed]

P W SKITT

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