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Mr. Edman

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MR Doherty
JR

JR 5.11



cc Secretary
Mr Gibson (O/R)
Mr O'Doherty

29 October 1998

To: 1. Mr Wolstencroft J. Wolstencroft 29/10/98
2. Mr McDonnell
3. Private Office

From: G K McGeown
Energy Division

Mr King 6/3/9

30/10

PRIORITY WRITTEN PQ NO 1119

I am attaching a draft reply and associated background note in response to the above PQ.

G. K. McGeown

G K McGEOWN

42/12

0016/GMcG



DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
An Equal Opportunities Organisation

PQ No 1119

PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION FOR WRITTEN ANSWER ON 3 NOVEMBER 1998

BY KEVIN McNAMARA
Name of Member

KINGSTON UPON HULL NORTH
Constituency

Reply prepared by J E WOLSTENCROFT Tel No 529200

Additional information available from G KMcGEOWN Tel No 529247

Date for Answer 3 NOVEMBER 1998

Date

Written No 1119

Mr McNamara

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, on how many days and on what occasions in the last year the Union Flag was flown outside the (a) Northern Ireland Electricity Regional Offices on the Campsie Industrial Estate and (b) other offices of the NIE.

Mr Ingram

Information on the flying of the Union Flag by private companies is not held by Government. I understand that Northern Ireland Electricity issued a statement on 11 August 1998 setting out the company's policy on the display of flags and emblems.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTE: SEE ATTACHED SHEET

1. Mr Kevin McNamara has tabled a Priority Written question seeking information on the number of occasions in the last year on which the Union Flag was flown outside the (a) Northern Ireland Electricity Regional Offices on the Campsie Industrial Estate (Londonderry) and (b) other offices of NIE.
2. It is not known what has prompted Mr McNamara's question. It may be linked to a statement in August by the Sinn Fein Deputy Mayor of Derry City Council – Lynn Fleming – querying the NIE policy of flying the Union Flag outside the Campsie office all year round. (Please see attached article from the Belfast Telegraph at Annex A.)
3. NIE issued a press statement in response to Councillor Fleming's comments (Annex B). The current policy is that the Union Flag and the Company Flag are flown all year round at the five major NIE work centres in Northern Ireland, namely Danesfort (HQ), Ballymena, Bangor, Campsie and Carn (Craigavon). This policy was adopted in 1988 in consultation with the relevant Trade Unions and following discussions with the then Fair Employment Agency. The company's Fair Employment practices, including the flying of the Union Flag, are kept under regular review in consultation with the Fair Employment Commission.
4. Guidance on the display of flags and emblems is contained in the Fair Employment Code of Practice. Following discussions between the relevant DED business areas, officials take the view that the provision of specific information on the flying of flags by a private company is not a matter for Government but for the company concerned. The suggested reply to Mr McNamara makes this point and draws attention to the NIE statement of 11 August 1998.

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ANNEX A

NIE defends flag policy as Fleming queries stance

By William Allen

NORTHERN Ireland Electricity today defended its policy of flying the Union Flag at major offices throughout the province.

The Sinn Fein deputy mayor of Derry, Lynn Fleming today queried the company's policy of flying the flag at its regional offices at Campsie all year round.

She said: "According to fair employment legislation the flag can only be flown on designated days between 8am and sunset."

"If there was some agreement reached with the workforce to fly this flag all year, I would like to know when this agreement was reached and if it still reflects the wishes of the workforce."

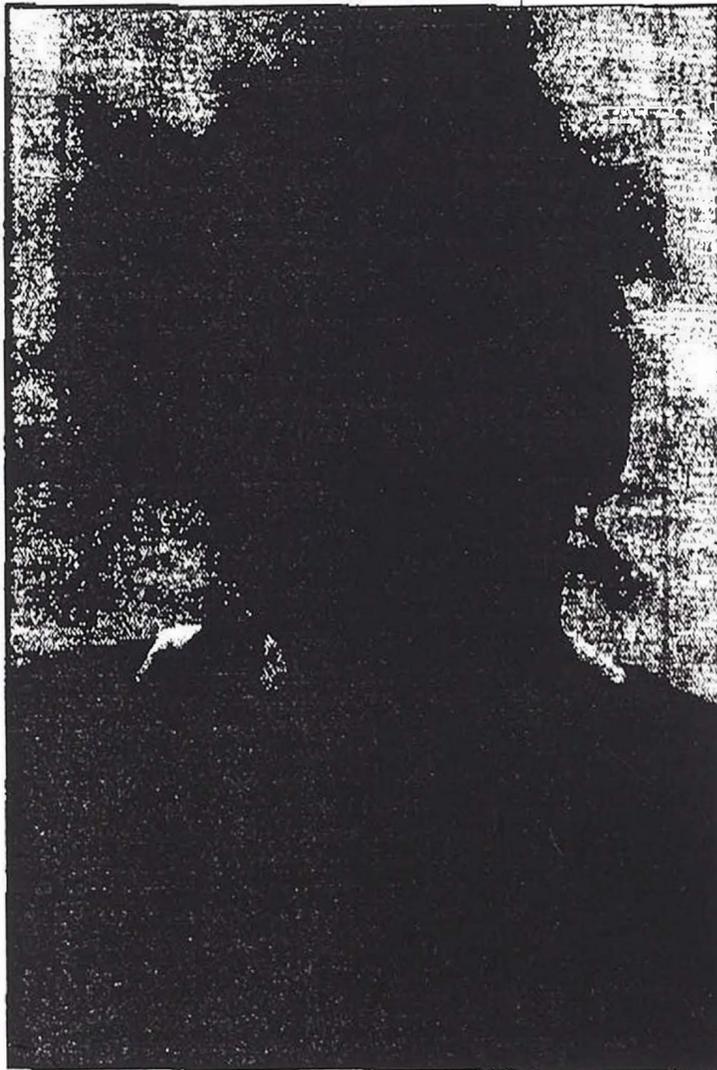
"Furthermore, does it reflect the wishes of the customer?"

But NIE today defended its stance.

A statement issued by the company said: "The current position is that the company flag and the Union flag are flown all year round at NIE major workcentres throughout Northern Ireland."

"This policy was adopted in consultation with the relevant trade unions and following discussions with the Fair Employment Agency."

"This policy has been in operation for a number of years. All our fair employment practices, including flying the Union flag, are kept under review by the company in consultation with the Fair Employment Commission."



Lynn Fleming: Questions.

NEWS RELEASE

Northern
Ireland
Electricity 

11 August 1998

Response to Flags and Emblems Policy

"Current position is that the Company Flag and the Union Flag are flown all year round at Northern Ireland Electricity major workcentres throughout Northern Ireland. This policy was adopted in consultation with the relevant Trade Unions and following discussions with the Fair Employment Agency. This policy has been in operation for a number of years.

All our Fair Employment practices including flying the Union flag are kept under review by the Company in consultation with the Fair Employment Commission."

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