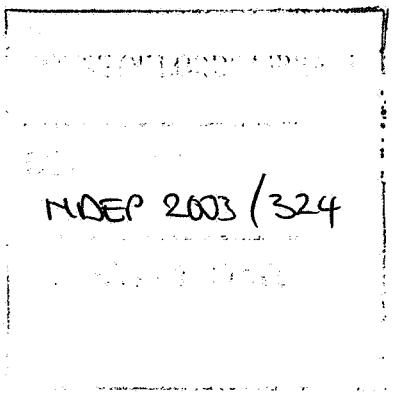
NDEP 2003/324



HL 1391 Refers.

The Lord Laird of Artigarvan
The House of Lords
Westminster
London SW1A 0PW

25 February, 2003

The Northern Ireland Office has notified me by a letter received on 13 February that you have tabled the following PQ, and it has asked me to provide you with a response.

> *To ask Her Majesty's Government whether the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission is developing a strategy for the United States; what is its statutory basis; and whether the Commission has consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office.*

The answer is, no, the Commission is not developing a strategy for the United States. The Commission is, however, planning to send a small delegation to visit various individuals and organisations in the United States later this year in order to inform them about the activities and plans of the Commission. We deem this to be reasonably incidental to (for example) our duty to promote understanding and awareness of the importance of human rights in Northern Ireland (section 69(6) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998). We have not consulted the Foreign and Commonwealth Office but before making such a visit we will inform the Northern Ireland Office and the US Consulate in Belfast.

Brice Dickson
Chief Commissioner