



Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill 2013-14

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The *Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill* was not amended in Committee. It returns for Report on 18 November 2013. The Government has tabled two amendments.

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The *Northern Ireland (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill* was not amended in Committee.

Clauses 1 to 9 were debated in Committee of the Whole House on [9 July 2013](#), cc265-328. No amendments were made.

The remaining clauses, schedules and new clauses were taken in a Public Bill Committee on [16 July 2013](#). They were also reported without amendment.

The provisions of the Bill are discussed in the [Explanatory Notes](#) and in the [Library Research Paper](#), RP 13/38. There is also a [schedule](#) showing some examples of existing legislation as it will look after being amended by the Bill.

The Bill is scheduled for Report stage on 18 November 2013. At time of writing the Government has tabled two amendments.

Amendment 1 relates to “protected information,” that is, information about donations which identifies the donor. The Bill as published provides that protected information relates to donations received before 1 October 2014. The Amendment changes the date to 1 January 2014. A similar amendment was tabled in Committee by Naomi Long of the Alliance, but was resisted by the Government. Ms Long’s argument was that she did not intend to create a situation in which information would be disclosed in January 2014. Instead, her amendments,

would make it clear to the general public that anything donated after January 2014 will eventually be made public, once the Secretary of State deems the security situation to be appropriate.¹

One of her two amendments to bring this about was put to a division. It was defeated by 294 to 16, but the ayes included both DUP and SDLP members.² The then Minister of State at the Northern Ireland Office, Mike Penning, placed emphasis on the security situation and the risk to donors. He said that the Bill moved things forward, albeit not at a pace that suited everyone.³

Amendment 2 concerns commencement. The Bill as published makes Sections 14, 15 and 16, amongst others, subject to commencement after two months. The amendment removes them from the list of such provisions. As a result, they form part of the Bill that comes into force on a day specified by order by the Secretary of State.

Mr Penning undertook to consider amendments if necessary to tighten the wording of clause 1 (3). This allows the Electoral Commission to release information on donations if the donor consents. Vernon Coaker and Nigel Dodds raised concerns in Committee as to whether the wording was watertight so as to protect the anonymity of those who wished to remain anonymous, and the latter argued that the provision might be tested in court. Mr Penning said, “if there is that concern, the Government will table an amendment in the other House and close it.”⁴

¹ HC Deb 9 July 2013, c265

² HC Deb 9 July 2013, c293

³ HC Deb 9 July 2013, c290

⁴ HC Deb 9 July 2013, c275