

NATIONAL ARCHIVES

IRELAND



Reference Code:	2012/90/712
Creation Date(s):	July 1982
Extent and medium:	2 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Access Conditions:	Open
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20 July 1982

Dr Martin Mansergh
Department of the Taoiseach
Upper Merrion Street
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Dear Martin

Since our informal meeting with you in Derry some weeks back, the I I P has been actively considering some of the ideas which were discussed in relation to the dilemma confronting many Nationalists who wish to oppose the Prior plan in a constructive and peaceful manner.

As you are aware, the I I P and other Parties face the problem of wishing to give full representation to the views of the Irish people resident in the North while at the same time being very reluctant to appear to contribute to the success of any scheme of government for the North which has been so insultingly devised without adequate consultation with the Irish Government and which is so obviously unacceptable to the overwhelming majority of non-Unionists.

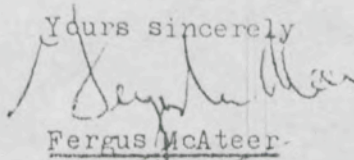
In these circumstances we believe that the Irish Government might be in a position to lessen significantly the difficulties of the Nationalist Parties and community by considering the establishment of an alternative, non-legislative assembly which could operate as an institution for the expression of Nationalist and other opinion in an atmosphere free of the anti-Irish hostility which so characterises the approach of the present British Government. This would in effect be a further development of the imaginative approach which has already resulted in the recent appointment of two Northern based politicians to the Irish Senate.

Perhaps only the Irish Government can rescue the many good Irish people of the North from increased alienation from the rest of Ireland. Already there are signs that the Prior strategy has had a measure of success in diminishing the Nationalist view-point and political position.

Our Central Executive has approved the enclosed exploratory document which outlines some of the possibilities and potential of an alternative assembly. Inevitably it is a subject which will require much discussion and investigation, principally by your Government, before the proposal would reach a workable stage. Nevertheless, the idea does merit careful attention and to this end our Party will be keeping the matter under continuous review.

I would be grateful if you would convey the substance of our thoughts to the Taoiseach as soon as possible. I look forward to hearing from you shortly on these suggestions and our earlier request for a meeting with Mr Haughey. In the meantime I wish you every success in your efforts to secure a solution to our persistent problems.

Yours sincerely


Fergus McAteer

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The All-Ireland Assembly — An Exploratory Document

Composition

1. Representatives of interested political parties in the North based on their respective strengths according to last year's local government or the forthcoming Northern Assembly elections.
2. Representatives from Dail Eireann.
3. All Irish M E P's.
4. Invited or visiting interested organisations or individuals.

Functions

1. To offer to the representatives of political groups throughout Ireland an opportunity to exchange views and offer opinions on all matters of national interest.
2. To act as an advisory assembly to the British, Irish and other Governments and international organisations on matters pertaining to the people of the North.
3. To consult with interested organisations and individuals throughout Ireland and the rest of the world on the Northern question and to contribute to a better understanding of the origins and dimensions of the problem.
4. To relay to the British Government the views and opinions of the assembly on matters affecting the people of the North.

A General Secretariat

It has been suggested a full-time supportive administration would be necessary to ensure the smooth and proper operation of the assembly. Many of its tasks would be similar to the ordinary functions of a Parliamentary administration.

The Sitzings

The frequency and duration of the assembly sittings will of course be largely governed by the functions with which it is invested. Meetings could be on a fortnightly, monthly or perhaps quaterly basis dependent on whether or not it is developed to its fullest extent. Some consideration should also be given to the question of plenary sessions and ad-hoc committees, delegations etc.

The status and remuneration of members of the assembly would be matters for further consultation.

CENTRAL EXECUTIVE

July 1982