

**The Office of the First Minister  
and Deputy First Minister**

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From: Rosalie Flanagan cc See below  
12 February 2001

To: PS/First Minister

**CIVIC FORUM MOTION: RESPONSE TO IAN PAISLEY ON CHURCHES  
REPRESENTATIVES**

1. During the debate on the Civic Forum Motion on Tuesday last, Ian Paisley alleged that the First Minister had been involved in trying to prevent the smaller Evangelical dominations having their rightful place on the Churches consortium and on the Civic Forum itself. The points are shown in the Official Record for 6 February, pages 43 (last complete paragraph) and 44 (first 2 paragraphs of Dr Paisley's speech).
2. I attach a draft response to Dr Paisley from the First Minister for consideration.

**Rosalie Flanagan**

**ROSALIE FLANAGAN**

cc PS/Deputy First Minister

PS/Mr Haughey

PS/Mr Nesbitt

Mr Loughran

Mr McCusker

Mr McCartney

Mrs Devlin

Mr Lavery

Mr May

Miss McKibbin

Ms Regan

Mr Barrington

Mr Campbell

Dr Gudgin

Mr Kerr

Mr Larkin

Mr Logue

## DRAFT LETTER FROM FIRST MINISTER TO DR IAN PAISLEY

In the debate in the Assembly on Tuesday 6 February on the Civic Forum Motion, you suggested that the smaller Evangelical Churches had had to battle to obtain representation on the Civic Forum and that I had been a party to this by pushing “an Evangelical Minister of the Irish Presbyterian Church” as the representative of Evangelicals on the Churches Consortium. You also alleged that this Presbyterian Minister was the nominee of the NIO to chair the Consortium.

These allegations are without foundation.

The report on the Civic Forum approved by the Assembly in February 1999 provided that the Churches should be invited to form a consortium for the purpose of nominating five individuals representing a broad spread of religious belief within the community.

Following the approval of that report, officials were involved in correspondence and discussions with a number of Church representatives, including representatives of the smaller Evangelical Churches. In particular, discussions were held with

Pastor David McConaghie from CALEB, who was subsequently invited to become a member of the Churches Consortium. The Churches Consortium agreed that the five nominees would include one person to represent the smaller evangelical denominations. It was agreed that the selection process for this nominee would be facilitated by CALEB and Evangelical Alliance and that in relation to the nomination for the smaller denominations, a public advertisement would be placed in the regional papers inviting nominations from

churches/faith communities/religious bodies, to ensure that a relevant faith groups had an opportunity to nominate. The Consortium nominated the five Churches representatives which, including included David McConaghie as the representative for the smaller evangelical denominations.himself, who is now a member of the Civic Forum.

I can state categorically that I played no part in either the arrangements for establishing the Churches Consortium or in the activities of that Consortium. The Consortium was chaired by a senior official of the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister. I understand that a representative from the Irish Council of Churches attended the first meeting of the Consortium as an observer. However, before the start of the second Consortium meeting it was agreed that no observers should attend that meeting or any subsequent meetings of the Consortium.

DAVID TRIMBLE

First Minister