

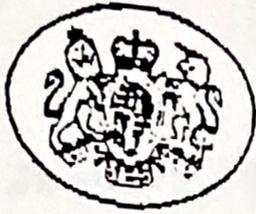
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From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



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- cc. PS/S of S (L+B)
- PS/Michael Ancram (L+B)
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- PS/Mr Fell
- Mr Thomas
- Mr Bell
- Mr Watkins
- Mr Williams
- Mr Brooker*
- Mr Daniell
- Mr Rickard
- Mr Maccabe
- Mr Archer RID
- HMA Dublin

* For advice please.



OIFIG AN TÁNAISTE AGUS AN AIRE GNÓTHAÍ EACHTRACHA
OFFICE OF THE TÁNAISTE AND MINISTER FOR FOREIGN AFFAIRS

BAILE ÁTHA CLIATH 2
DUBLIN 2

(January, 1994.

The Rt. Hon. Sir Patrick Mayhew, QC, MP,
Secretary of State for Northern Ireland,
Stormont Castle,
Belfast BT4 3ST.

Dear Patrick,

Thank you for your letter of 16th December concerning the proposed establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee.

While, in formal procedural terms, the establishment of a Select Committee is indeed a matter for the House of Commons, you will, I am sure, be aware of a number of serious concerns which have been voiced about the proposal.

As is clear from the reactions of the Northern Ireland political parties, it is viewed there as a divisive issue, sought by one side of the community only. The proposal therefore has inevitable - if possibly disproportionate - symbolic and partisan overtones.

Moreover, there are doubts whether the composition and working methods of a Select Committee, designed for conditions in Great Britain, can deal sensitively with the needs of a deeply divided society, where the majoritarian approach has altogether different connotations.

As regards your reference to the Talks, the point has been widely made that the relationship between any new institutions in Northern Ireland and the Westminster Parliament was one of the issues to be addressed in that framework. That this sensitive question should be determined in advance of resumed negotiations and in apparent disregard for the criterion of cross-community support which had been consistently invoked by the Government up to last summer, has inevitably added a further dimension to the concerns which have been felt at the proposal.

Yours sincerely,

Dick Spring, T. D.,
Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs