

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
STORMONT CASTLE
BELFAST BT4 3ST

Tel. Belfast (0232) 520700

John Holmes Esq
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister
10 Downing Street
LONDON
SW1A 2AA

See letter out.

File

JH
30/7.

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Dear John

A REVIEW OF ELECTORAL MATTERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND

My Secretary of State has been concerned by the allegations about electoral abuse in Northern Ireland during the recent general and local elections (and previously). Having considered a number of options with officials she wishes to announce an internal review of the arrangements for elections to begin with an urgent investigation into the scale and nature of vote stealing and invention.

The terms of reference for this review would specifically exclude the electoral system itself, but would be broad enough to allow consideration of a number of other matters where Northern Ireland's arrangements are distinct from those elsewhere in the UK. We are suggesting the following:

To consider the legislative and administrative arrangements - *other than those concerning the electoral system used* - for, and the conduct of, votes and elections in Northern Ireland and make recommendations. In particular, as a priority, to consider the evidence for electoral abuse at the last three elections to be held in Northern Ireland (general election 1997, local elections 1997, and the elections on May 30 1996) and make a report.



An announcement of some action on this front is likely to be welcomed by the Northern Ireland parties who have all pressed their concerns on Dr Mowlam and Mr Murphy. If the Prime Minister is content Dr Mowlam would like to announce the review if possible before the recess. This review is, of course, separate to any national review of electoral systems which might take place in the future.

I am copying this letter to the private secretaries to the Home, Scottish and Welsh Secretaries and Lord Chancellor.

Yours ever
JMcK
J McKERVILL