

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE

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Prime Minister

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1. I think this advice is right. It is not the right time to see the District Chairman.
2. The NIO's idea of seeing them at a reception in NI in the autumn - x over - is 2 May 1996 a good one: not least because, if you also include next year's Chairman, you meet the inevitable problem for a similar event in Downing St. next Feb.

Dear Edward

When you will have other things on your mind.

3. Done?

Thank you for your letter of 29 March asking for our views as to whether the economic seminar for District Councils should now be rescheduled, given that the Councils had been told last February that the Prime Minister hoped to do so before too long.

(Edward)  
3/5

The Secretary of State and his colleagues have considered in detail the case for organising a new seminar, or other event, before the current Mayors/Chairmen leave office at the beginning of June. Their view is that this would not be advisable.

The position now is different from that in February. At that stage, economic issues were very much to the fore, not least in the minds of District Councils who had just gone through the process of striking their District Rate and who would be keen to discuss how they envisaged economic development being taken forward in their areas, including local initiatives which they could fund from the Rates.

✓ Another consideration is that the current pre-occupation of politicians in Northern Ireland - and the current priority for Ministers - is the forthcoming elections and the

arrangements for negotiations and the Forum. The Secretary of State considers that an economic seminar would be an unwelcome distraction at this stage.

x | That said, a decision not to hold an event will disappoint the outgoing Mayors/Chairmen who will see their opportunity of meeting the Prime Minister disappearing. The Secretary of State would therefore suggest that the Prime Minister should consider hosting an event - possibly a large reception - for District Councils (covering the new Mayors/Chairmen and those who were to attend the February seminar) during an autumn visit to the Province.

A number of Councils have begun to enquire as to whether an event is to be arranged to replace the February seminar. Our view is that we now need to inform all Councils of whatever decision you make. The Northern Ireland Office would be happy to issue a letter once you let us know your views on our proposal.

*Yours ever*  
*David*  
C D KYLE