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### IRELAND



<b>Reference Code:</b>	2005/151/675
<b>Title:</b>	Letter to Harold Wilson, MP, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from Liam Cosgrave, TD, Taoiseach on subject of power-sharing in Northern Ireland
<b>Creation Date(s):</b>	8 January 1975
<b>Level of description:</b>	Item
<b>Extent and medium:</b>	2 pages
<b>Creator(s):</b>	Department of the Taoiseach
<b>Access Conditions:</b>	Open
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8th January, 1975.

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Dear Prime Minister,

I know that you will shortly be publishing a document on power-sharing, as a preliminary to the Convention elections. For some time past we have been concerned at various suggestions that have seemed to imply that this document might contain as examples of power-sharing to be considered by the Convention forms of power-sharing that would not require membership by minority representatives of whatever form of Executive Northern Ireland might have under new Constitutional arrangements. There has also been a tendency to substitute the vague term "participation" for "power-sharing" in official discussions on this subject, and in one recent instance an official of the Northern Ireland Office actually suggested that among the forms of "participation" that would be mentioned in this proposed document would be "the system of entrenched minority", which seems incompatible with minority participation in the Executive.

Garret FitzGerald recently spoke to Jim Callaghan on this subject, when they met to discuss arrangements for the British re-negotiation, and, of course, he also pressed the point with Marlyn Rees when they met. I feel, however, that there may still be a danger of misunderstanding on this point and accordingly I should be grateful to have your personal assurance that our agreed position stated in a joint communique last September, and confirmed in November still stands - viz that no form of administration for Northern Ireland that does not include power-sharing in government will be acceptable to your Government - and that the forthcoming document will, despite any suggestions to the contrary at official level, make this explicitly clear.

You will, of course, appreciate that any modification of our joint position on this matter would undermine the basis of the common and agreed stance that Irish and British Governments have been able to adopt on Northern Ireland since the abolition of Stormont three years ago and would clearly be damaging to the prospects



for stability there. However, I am sure that whatever may have been suggested at official level, this is not your intention, and that you will be able to give my Government the necessary assurance that there has been and will be no change in your Government's policy in these matters, and that the document on power-sharing will reflect this fully.

*Yours sincerely*

LIAM COSGRAVE

The Right Hon. Harold Wilson, C.B.E., F.R.S., M.P.,  
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