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6 September 1982

Dr Martin Mansergh
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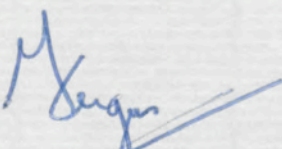
Dear Martin

I enclose for your consideration a copy of a document explaining our Party's agreed policy towards the forthcoming Assembly elections. My Party would be obliged if you could bring it to the attention of the Taoiseach as early as possible.

My Central Executive has asked me to renew our request for a meeting with the Taoiseach. I will be in touch with you within the next few days to discuss any matters arising from this request or from the contents of the document.

With best wishes.

Yours sincerely



Fergus McAteer
PARTY CHAIRMAN

Enc

cc to Martin Burke D/A AHM.

9/9
1. Secretary to The Government.
Mr. Murray
To rec, please
2. Dr. Mansergh
8.9.82
Mr. Kiernan
For information. No
action is intended on this letter, other
than to inform Mr. McAteer, whom
he rings, that the T. as already
stated, will not be meeting the
Northern political parties prior
to the election.
8/9/82 Martin
Hansard

*Shown to the Taoiseach

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The Central Executive of the Irish Independence Party Meeting, in conjunction with its District Councillors, has reached a consensus on the Party strategy in regard to the forthcoming Assembly elections. Our attitude has been finally determined after two long and soul searching meetings within the last week and after lengthy consultation with Party members throughout the North.

THE ASSEMBLY

We have been convinced for a considerable time that the Prior proposals offer absolutely nothing to the Nationalist population. They were framed with no regard for the concerns and aspirations of the Irish people and without taking account of the representations of the Irish Government or the IIP.

The workability of the Assembly has always presented problems but more importantly, since its conception and design, the Prior plan has looked certain to provoke outrage in non-Unionist circles and this it has certainly done. It represents an attempt to excavate the ancient foundations of Unionism and restore them in a new look Assembly. Before the eyes of the Nationalist people the British Government has raised the ugly spectre of the return of patronage and favouritism to the corridors of Stormont.

Behind the attitude of Mr Prior and his colleagues there has lurked what can only be considered an exclusionist philosophy which is certain to ensure that genuine Nationalist representatives will not be able to sit in the Assembly. In essence, Mr Prior has locked the Nationalist spokesmen out of the Assembly by his refusal to accommodate a non-Unionist viewpoint. His Assembly is the greatest possible insult to the Irish people because it is a cynical invitation to assist the British to govern this part of Ireland.

The emergence and development of the British proposals over the past months have convinced us that there is no-one behind them even remotely sympathetic to the Nationalist tradition in Ireland. In particular, Mrs Thatcher's confiscation of the Irish dimension from the first drafts of the White Paper earlier this year, coupled with Mr Prior's assertion that his proposals would tie us closer to the UK, leave us in no doubt about the intention of the British Government.

Not only is Mr Prior attempting to dictate what type of Assembly anti-Unionists should sit in, but he is also trying to dictate who should sit there. His efforts to control the composition of the Assembly must be roundly condemned. Whether it

be an Irish Senator or an Irish prisoner, the Nationalist people should be free to vote for whom they want in the election. They have been denied this right and for this rebuke the British Government will pay the price of non-co-operation.

THE ELECTION

There can be no denying the fact that the decision on whether or not to contest the election has proved a difficult one for most anti-Unionist parties. Those of us who believe in peaceful constitutional action and regularly renewing mandates are usually most reluctant to sidestep the electoral process.

In most circumstances it is quite easy to distinguish between participation in the election and approval of the institution for which the election is being held. Not so on this occasion. From the outset, Mr Prior has so devised his plan such that he could regard the holding of elections to the Assembly as a partial triumph in itself regardless of whether seats in the Assembly are taken up. Not for the first time has the British Government drawn the suspicion that it is using the electoral process as a means of plunging the Nationalist population into uncertainty, leading possibly to bitter division. This we see as a key and most worrying element of the British strategy.

In view of this, the IIP has decided that it will definitely not be nominating anyone to contest the forthcoming election. However, no-one in our Party intends to sit with his feet on the mantel-piece during the run up to 20 October. Indeed, it will be the IIP's most intensive election involvement to date. Over the next six weeks we will be conducting a campaign to persuade people to have nothing to do with the Prior election.

We are calling on all like-minded people in the SDLP and Sinn Fein to continue to assert their voices within their own parties and argue for non-participation in the election. We take this opportunity to congratulate those who have already made it clear on an individual or branch basis that they will be having nothing to do with the proceedings on 20 October.

In addition, we hope to establish an active lobbying platform to promote a full appreciation of the dangers of the Prior plan and election. Over the next few weeks we will be ensuring that our message is carried clearly to the Nationalist people. Simultaneously, we will be attempting to secure the support of interest groups and politicians in America, Europe and in the South.

We will be urging outright rejection of the advice of some elements of the media which has been designed to mislead our people into believing that there is some real merit in going to the polls on this occasion. It must be understood that this election is not like other elections. Every vote cast is an extra measure of success for Jim Prior's plan. He will be able to blame the failure of his Assembly on the squabbling native politicians and absolve himself of the urgent responsibility for bringing forward a realistic initiative based on a phased ending of British rule here.

The IIP believes that it is imperative that all Nationalists stand four square with the Irish Government by refusing to lend the Prior election any credibility. We will continue to press for the establishment of an alternative assembly in Dublin to provide a forum for Northern representatives to discuss matters relating to them.

We must confess to being somewhat disappointed that the Irish Government has not as yet adopted the substance of our proposals. A decision on our suggestions would have proved most helpful to us in our deliberations this week, although we recognise that Mr Haughey would like further time to consider and develop his thoughts before finally committing himself one way or the other.

The IIP will be giving specific instructions to its supporters after nomination day. In the meantime, our advice to those still in the election is to get out now before this British inspired madness goes any further. We are convinced that come 20 October the bulk of the Nationalist Community will not wish to vote and will be deeply suspicious of any suggestion of a post-election change of mind by anyone elected on an abstentionist ticket. But above all else, we are sure that nothing would demonstrate the unacceptability of Prior's plan more clearly to the watching world than an election with only Unionist participants and empty ballot boxes in Nationalist areas.