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Sir Ewart Bell KCB  
NIO  
Belfast

Your reference

Our reference

Date 18 April 1983

*my only comment is that it should be 'Bob' - not 'John' in 'background' on para 5.*

*① Sir Ewart - are you content with the note?*

*② Place letter on WCA/4*

*③ R. Pol*

*I mentioned this point to Mr Falkon*

*algm 28/4*

*WED 27/4*

DUBLIN VISIT

1. I attach a draft minute which I have prepared of your conversations at lunch. Perhaps your office could give me a ring if they are happy for me to issue this in final form, in which case I will also send it to Stephen Boys Smith in NIO London.

2. I also enclose a copy of a letter which I have sent to Patrick Eyers dealing with your proposed visit to the States. 1x

*Yours ever,*  
*David*  
D E Tatham



British election, it might be possible to see how the SDLP wish to fit the Assembly into a wider framework could be accommodated and clearly both sides would have to work closely together.

3. We discussed the prospects for the SDLP in the General Election '(which the Irish thought was most likely in October). Both sides agreed that Messrs Adams and Carron would probably be elected for Sinn Fein and that Mr Hume and possibly one or two others would get in for the SDLP. But everything depended on how many Nationalist and Unionist candidates stood.

The Forum for a New Ireland  
4. The Irish side told us how things stood after the initial meeting of party leaders on 14 April. Nothing had been concluded because Mr Haughey wished to consult his Fianna Fail colleagues, but a second meeting on 21 April should enable firm arrangements to be made. The number of members which the forum would have was still in doubt, although it would probably be in multiples of four - say between 16 and 40. It was not clear whether the parties would be represented in equal numbers (although they probably will be since no one will wish to be hard on the SDLP). The Secretary, <sup>will be J.R. Tobin, Clerk of the Senate</sup> and some of the Secretariat of the forum will be drawn from Parliamentary civil servants (the staff of the Oireachtas) although members of normal Government Departments will probably also be drafted in. It is at least agreed that the forum will meet in Dublin Castle and the expenses should be minimal as only the SDLP will have to be paid travel and subsistence.

5. No one on the Irish side was very clear how the forum would develop. While general sessions might be open, sub-committees would be established to cover various topics and these could well meet in closed session. Submissions from outsiders would certainly be welcome and the Irish hoped these would include Unionist views. They certainly expected the churches to contribute. (The DFA had hoped that the Alliance Party would send a submission - but after Mr Napier's speech on 16 April this seems less likely.) The Irish spoke very warmly about the educational value of Mr <sup>Bob</sup>~~John~~ McCartney's visit to Dublin in 1981 and hoped that he would consider another trip. Sir Ewart pointed out that given the criticism this would arouse from entrenched Unionist opinion it was unlikely to happen - at least until a British election was over.

6. The Irish side pointed out that clear differences of view still remained among the political parties which would comprise the forum. Dr FitzGerald's conception of it was far less nationalist than that of either Mr Haughey or Mr Hume: there was a real danger that Mr Haughey would simply use it as another platform from which to expound Republican views. However it developed, the Government were determined they <sup>from</sup> should report before the end of the year. While they hoped for a unanimous report they could not be sure of getting one.

#### The Irish Economy

7. Mr Doyle had little new to say on this topic, though he did suggest sardonically that the public debate between the Tanaiste, Mr Spring and the Minister of Finance, Mr Dukes, might have been a ritual dance intended to assure  
/their

their party supporters that they were fighting their respective corners vigorously.

US Embassy

8. Sir Ewart also called on the US Ambassador and gave him a useful briefing on the state of Northern Ireland. There was some discussion of Sir Ewart's own visit to North America in May which I am pursuing separately.