

TELECOPY TO SHEILA MARSHALL, CPC, NI (L)

MR ROSS'S ORAL QUESTION ON COSTS OF NI ASSEMBLY - BACKGROUND NOTE

1. The total cost of the Northern Ireland Assembly from November 1982 to 31 May 1986 was £9.3 million. There will be additional costs in respect of Members' salaries and allowances up to the date of dissolution. The £9.3 million is made up as follows:-

<u>Members' Salaries and Allowances</u>	<u>Staff Salaries</u>	<u>Other (ie postage, publication of Reports)</u>
£4.38 million	£3.26 million	£1.65 million

2. These figures relate to an attendance by 60 Members - 13 SDLP and 5 Sinn Fein Members refused to take their seats and did not therefore receive salaries. It is estimated that the total cost of the Assembly at 31 May 1986 including the salaries of the 18 absent Members would have been £10 million. This excludes secretarial and travel allowances to which absent Members may have been entitled.
3. Assembly Members received £10,139 per annum. The following additional allowances were also paid:

Presiding Officer/Speaker	:	£10,907 pa
Chairmen of the 6 Departmental Committees	:	£ 3,380 pa
Deputy Chairmen of the 6 Departmental Committees	:	£ 1,690 pa
Secretarial allowances (to defray expenses incurred on secretarial assistance in carrying out duties	:	up to £7,527 pa
Travel expenses by car	:	30.4p per mile for first 10,000 miles 18p thereafter in any year.

4. In protest at the Anglo-Irish Agreement, the Assembly ceased to carry out its scrutiny functions after 16 November 1985 and in protest at this decision Alliance Members stopped attending the Assembly on 5 December 1985. On 13 March 1986 the Assembly formally placed its scrutiny activity in abeyance. In February 1985 Messrs Paisley and Robinson resigned as Chairmen of the Agriculture and Environment Committees respectively : several other Unionists also formally resigned from the Committee. These Members who formally resigned as Chairmen or Deputy Chairmen of the Departmental Committees ceased to receive additional allowances but other Unionist and Alliance Members continued to receive these allowances even though the Committees were not functioning.

#### Assembly Staffing

5. Apart from the Clerk to the Assembly who is appointed by the Queen on the recommendation of the Secretary of State, and the Editor of Debates who is appointed by the Clerk, the Assembly was staffed by some 80 Northern Ireland Civil Servants on secondment from their Departments. Although the Assembly has been dissolved, the legislative provisions for an Assembly and elections to it remain on the statute book and the Clerk to the Assembly will continue in office until he is dismissed or resigns. Government hopes that circumstances can be created as soon as possible in which elections to a new Assembly can take place and it is intended that the Clerk, the Editor of Debates and certain core services (eg the Library) should remain in place for the foreseeable future. There will also be some end of session work which will occupy some civil servants for several weeks but it is intended that the majority of civil servants should be returned to their Departments as soon as possible.

#### Savings

6. Any savings which arise from the dissolution of the Assembly will be available for use elsewhere within the Northern Ireland Block.

/JH