Northern Ireland Office
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Michael Alexander Esq
10 Downing Street
LONDON SW1

8th January 1980

Dear Michael,

Thank you for your letter of 3 January with which you sent Mr Molyneaux's letter to the Prime Minister covering the UUP's constitutional proposals. The proposals themselves reveal the UUP to be in particularly inflexible mood; and by placing such emphasis on the fact that he is submitting the proposals to the Prime Minister, Mr Molyneaux is clearly seeking to deliver a snub to the Northern Ireland political Conference.

The proposals fall into two separate parts. First the UUP present their proposals for a system of devolved government. These are largely a recapitulation of the recommendations of the 1975 Convention Report, which was rejected at the time by all the main parties at Westminster on the grounds that it allowed an inadequate role to representatives of the minority and therefore did not command sufficient support throughout the community. Even Paisley now seems to accept that the Convention Report is a dead duck. Yet in the one area where the Report did give minority representatives minimal participation (seats on and chairmanships of backbench non-executive committees), the UUP are now even less generous than was the Convention Report.

The UUP's proposals for devolved government are made in an effort to counter the success of Paisley in presenting himself as the leading Unionist in favour of restoring devolved government. The UUP's real interest is in the failure of the Conference to idenfity enough agreement on which to base devolved government, and the consequent imposition of a system of local government on the same pattern as exists in Great Britain. Thus the second part of the UUP's proposals

set out the arrangements that they would like to see for a local government system in Northern Ireland. These proposals would be total anathema to the SDLP and to the minority community: they are not compatible with progress to devolved government and therefore smack of integration; and they contain no allowance for any role whatsoever for the minority.

It seems profitless for the Prime Minister to discuss the substance ... of the UUP proposals in her reply to Mr Molyneaux. The attached draft reply therefore concentrates on acknowledging Mr Molyneaux's letter and suggesting that the right place for substantive discussion is the Conference.

Yours ever,

Roy Harrington

R A HARRINGTON
Private Secretary

PC

DRAFT LETTER

FILE NUMBER.....

ADDRESSEE'S REFERENCE.....

To	Enclosures	Copies to be sent to
J H Molyneaux Esq JP MP Unionist Headquarters 3 Glengall Street Belfast BT12 5AE		
(Full Postal Address)		(Full Address, if Necessary)

LETTER DRAFTED FOR SIGNATURE BY PRIME MINISTER
(Name of Signatory)

Thank you for your letter of 31 December covering your party's proposals for systems of devolved and local government in Northern Ireland. I have read them with interest and have passed a copy to Humphrey Atkins.

I cannot help thinking that it is a pity that you are not present at the Conference in Belfast where discussion of just the issues raised by your proposals is now taking place. I know that they have received wide publicity and the Conference can be expected to be well aware of what they contain. ~~However it seems to me that~~ But it could well be helpful for Humphrey to table your proposals in their entirety at the Conference, and I should be grateful if you would confirm that you would have no objection to his doing so.

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