

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE
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Michael Alexander Esq
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5 November 1981

Dear Michael,

*kg
Smith*

ANGLO IRISH SUMMIT: PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

We understand that in the private session with the Prime Minister on Friday, the Taoiseach may refer to what he sees as the desirability of proportional representation being used in Northern Ireland for Westminster elections. The Prime Minister may wish to be aware of the background to Dr FitzGerald's views.

The single transferable vote system of proportional representation is used in all Northern Ireland elections other than Parliamentary elections. It is also used for all elections in the Irish Republic. Dr FitzGerald is a keen proponent of PR(STV). He would like to see PR(STV) used in Northern Ireland because he believes that in Parliamentary elections minority parties - in particular the SDLP - come off disproportionately badly under the first past the post system (10 of the 12 Northern Ireland seats are held by Unionists; with the 17 seats that will shortly exist the SDLP may also not do well if the Nationalist vote is split by the existence of extreme Republican candidates). Successive Governments have of course always resisted the use of proportional representation in Parliamentary elections in Northern Ireland since it has been considered undesirable to have members of the same House elected by different methods.

I am copying this letter to the Private Secretaries to the Home Secretary, Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and Sir Robert Armstrong.

*Man
Steph*

S W BOYS SMITH