

PERSONAL

22 March, 1982.

Dear Ian,

When I wrote to you on 2 November about the Prime Minister's meeting with Fitzgerald, I was obliged to rely upon press reports of the intended outcome, which unfortunately proved accurate. I am in the same position now in writing to you about the reported intention to elect an assembly in Northern Ireland, with a view to certain responsibilities being transferred to it in some form subsequently.

To get an assembly set up, by whatever device, has been the fixed objective of ^{the} Northern Ireland Office for at least the past two or three years. It is now bound to be seen as designed to provide the Ulster element for the parliamentary tier of the Anglo-Irish Council which the Prime Minister and the Irish premier established last November. Indeed, no other explanation for such an initiative is tenable. There can be no serious prospect that politicians committed to oppose or to promote a united Ireland will ever co-operate in joint administration of the province, and any assembly sustaining no executive would be a focus of irresponsible opposition to government.

I do not deny that an assembly can be elected and that representatives from it could be induced to participate in the Anglo-Irish Council. What I wish to put on record is my conviction that not only would conflict in the province be exacerbated by these processes but, as soon as the significance of participation in the Anglo-Irish Council was perceived, it would be the signal for still graver convulsion than followed the Prime Minister's two previous meetings with the Irish premier of the day. Knowing, as I do, her goodwill towards Ulster and her understanding of the realities there, I trust she will not sanction proposals so self-evidently adverse to peace and good government in the province.

I Gow, Esq., MP.

*Yours ever,
Ernoch.*