

CONFIDENTIAL

From: THE PRIVATE SECRETARY

ex Prior Office



NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE  
GREAT GEORGE STREET,  
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Mr Prior 9/7  
Prime Minister

Willie Rickett Esq  
10 Downing Street  
LONDON  
SW1

In this case, the Lord President's Office are content for this procedure to be followed. They see the force of Mr Prior's argument that the attached 8 July 1982 announcement of the date of the elections to the Northern Ireland Assembly should be reported in Northern Ireland at the same time as London, rather than simply being read in mainland newspapers. Agree? WR 9/7

Dear Willie

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY: DATE OF ELECTION

You may wish to be aware that Mr Prior intends to lay before Parliament on Wednesday 14 July a draft Order-in-Council appointing the date - 20 October - of the election to the Northern Ireland Assembly. He proposes to announce his intention to hold the election on that date by means of a written Parliamentary Question, and would also indicate in his reply that the election would be held on the basis of the existing twelve Parliamentary constituencies. ... The text of the proposed Question and Answer is attached.

The date for laying the draft Order, 14 July, is the earliest practicable one after the second reading of the Northern Ireland Bill in the House of Lords, ie when both Houses will have given their approval to the Bill in principle. However we do not intend to have the draft Order debated until after Royal Assent to the Bill. But time will be short as the Order would have to be affirmed in time to be made at the Privy Council on 30 July if there is to be an Autumn election.

Because we wish to publish the reply to the Question as early as possible in the day, and especially before the Belfast evening paper goes to print, we should like to arrange for the reply to be issued before 1.00 pm, rather than at 3.30 pm, on Wednesday 14 July (in which case the Question will need to be tabled on Monday, notionally for answer on Tuesday 13 July).

I should be grateful if you could confirm that you foresee no difficulties with this course of action.

I am copying this letter to Nick Huxtable (Lord President's Office) and to Murdo MacLean (Chief Whip's Office).

I have asked Lady Young's Office for a reply to his question. WR 12/7

Yours sincerely

Lord Privy Seal  
Is the W.P. will be?

Mike Hopkin's given precedence over the Employment Bill in the Lords?

M W HOPKINS

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BB



**E.R.**

DRAFT, PARLIAMENTARY QUESTION AND ANSWER

To ask the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, on what date the election to the next Northern Ireland Assembly will be held, and if he can now state how many constituencies will be used for that election.

MR PRIOR

Subject to the progress of the Northern Ireland Bill currently before Parliament, it is the Government's intention that the election to the Northern Ireland Assembly should take place on 20 October. I am today laying a draft Order in Council for that purpose before Parliament. The Order will be subject to affirmative resolution in each House.

An election on 20 October would be held on the basis of the existing twelve Parliamentary constituencies.