



Prime Minister ✓
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Northern Ireland Office
Stormont Castle
Belfast BT4 3ST

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27/8

James Molyneaux Esq JP MP
41 Ballynadrentagh Road
Aldergrove
CRUMLIN
BT29 4AR

26 August 1982

Dear Mr. Molyneaux,

The Prime Minister has asked me to reply to the message which Mr Millar passed to No 10 earlier today on your behalf, and which was released to the Press this afternoon. I have noted the decision of the SDLP at their meeting yesterday to take part in the Election which will take place on 20 October but not to participate in the work of the Assembly.

Parliament considered the Northern Ireland Act very carefully. All experience shows that no scheme of devolution will work effectively unless it is likely to command widespread acceptance throughout the community. As the Government's White Paper said, in forming a judgement on this, the Government would only consider a proposal to command sufficiently widespread acceptance if it appeared to be acceptable to both sides of the community. Government policy on this fundamental point could scarcely be clearer.

I have taken careful note of your request, but I believe that the right course is for the Election to proceed. I therefore cannot support your view that Mr Speaker should be advised to recall Parliament or that the Government should recommend to Parliament that the Northern Ireland Act should be amended.

I am as always available to talk to you if that would be helpful.

Yours Sincerely,

Roberta Curran
for JAMES PRIOR

[APPROVED BY THE SECRETARY OF
STATE AND SIGNED IN HIS ABSENCE]