

cc Mrs Smyth, Mrs McAuley, Mrs Deane, Mrs Sweeney, Mr McGuinness, Jaqueline



ASST 153/2
SEC 12 FEB 1999
CENT SEC



10 DOWNING STREET
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THE PRIME MINISTER

10 February 1999

Dear David,



When we met on 3 February, you asked about our intentions on the running of the d'Hondt procedure for appointing shadow Ministers.

After approval of a determination on 15 February, the Secretary of State and I do not envisage the d'Hondt procedure operating until at least two weeks later. If powers are to be devolved in mid-March, the d'Hondt procedure will need to operate early in March.

After 15 February, the Secretary of State intends to invite the parties' views on the details of when and how d'Hondt will operate. She expects to publish a further draft standing order for consultation in the week beginning 22 February, with a view to making the standing order in the week beginning 1 March.

Our aim remains to complete by 10 March the necessary legislative and other preparations for the transfer of powers and coming into force of the British-Irish Agreement. A date for the actual transfer of powers has not yet been set: in practice, it cannot be less than 2 weeks after the d'Hondt procedure operates. It will be set in accordance with section 3 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and the requirements of the British-Irish Agreement.

I am sending a copy of this letter to Seamus Mallon.

Tony

The Rt Hon David Trimble MP

- cc PS/S&S (L+B)*
- PS/McMurry (L+B)*
- PS/PUS (L+B)*
- PS/McSeidle*
- Mr Jeffrey*
- Mr Stephens*
- Mr Whypoll*
- Mr Brooker*
- Mr McAuliffe*
- Mr D Ferguson*