

I welcome all that is proposed in the said bill - Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Bill.

- 1) to render ineffective any appointment of a special adviser which does not comply with the provisions of the code for appointments;
- 2) to provide that special advisers are subject to the processes and procedures of the disciplinary code operative in the Northern Ireland Civil Service;
- 3) to make it plain that an appointing minister is accountable and responsible for his special adviser;
- 4) to restrict the remuneration of special advisers so that it cannot be greater than that applicable within the Senior Civil Service Pay Structure to Assistant Secretary (Grade 5);
- 5) to impose a statutory duty on a departmental minister and Permanent Secretary to ensure no person exercises the functions or enjoys the privileges of a special adviser other than the duly appointed person;
- 6) to reduce the number of special advisers within the Executive Office from 8 to 4;
- 7) to prevent the amendment of the Civil Service Commissioners (Northern Ireland) Order 1999 by the exercise of prerogative powers;
- 8) to extend the powers of the Commissioner for Standards to include investigation of complaints against ministers;
- 9) to ensure the activities and meetings of ministers and special advisers are adequately recorded within the Civil Service;
- 10) to provide for a register of interests in respect of ministers and special advisers;
- 11) to ensure special advisers are not subject to inappropriate control and direction;
- 12) to make it a criminal offence for any minister, civil servant or special adviser to use personal accounts in regard to electronic communication relating to government business;
- 13) to make it a specific criminal offence for a minister or special adviser to communicate confidential government information to a third party; and
- 14) to require the First Minister and deputy First Minister to report biennially on the functioning of government and act to improve same.