

PRIME MINISTER

The Irish response to our latest proposals needs very careful consideration. I am not convinced that Sir Robert Armstrong needs to rush back to the Irish in a matter of days with a reply. Other indications have been that the Irish (and the SDLP) are prepared to play this beyond the May local election.

So I suggest that you ask Sir Robert Armstrong to postpone his 19 February meeting with the Irish. Tomorrow's discussion should be a first look, with a further meeting when you you get back from Washington to settle our line.

Particular points which you might look at tomorrow are:

(i) can we accept the very considerable extension of the Committee's powers to cover economic and social matters (para 14 of the Irish paper)?

(ii) what about an Irish representative in Belfast?

(iii) can we really allow the Irish to put forward views on the details of devolution in the North (para 8 of Irish paper)?

(iv) should we insist that the present Irish offer can only be considered in the context of changing their constitution?

C.D.P.

13 February, 1985

I am not able to give sufficient time to consider this until I return from the U.S.
Delay any further exchanges no