



Prime Minister

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

I have seen Sir Robert Armstrong's minute to you of 7 May in which he proposes a revision of paragraph 2 of the British proposal to meet the strong objections of the Irish delegation to the wording OD(I) had approved.

2. The substantial point, namely that HMG retain the sole executive power in Northern Ireland, (subject to any agreed devolution) is of course absolutely essential. We must be able to say and show that this is so. I believe that the point is adequately safeguarded in the revised text in paragraph 4 of Sir Robert Armstrong's minute. The Irish are making heavy weather of changes of wording which import no change of substance. But there is no doubt of the importance which they attach to the presentation of this particular passage, and it would not be sensible to allow its wording to become the rock on which the Anglo-Irish talks founder. We must avoid "fudge" now or later; but we should not be on good ground in resisting a return to wording closer to the text we ourselves offered on 21 January.

3. It will be time enough, after the next round of official talks, and when we have Irish Ministers' reaction to the amended British proposal, to take stock again of the other issues mentioned by Sir Robert Armstrong.

4. I am copying this minute to Geoffrey Howe and Robert Armstrong.

D.H.

D.H.

9 May 1985

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