



CONFIDENTIAL

Prime Minister

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I am not sure why Lord Carrington is being so obstinate about this but I fear this will have to await his return. Agree?

MR. ALEXANDER

Anglo/Irish Joint Studies

Yes no Phd 12/11

In Mr. Whitmore's minute of 23rd December, he said that the Prime Minister would be grateful if I would put to Lord Carrington the revised arrangements for the Anglo/Irish Joint Studies which were set out in the second paragraph of his minute.

2. I subsequently had a word with the Prime Minister, who indicated that, if Lord Carrington thought that Mr. Hurd could not undertake the chairmanship of the proposed Ministerial Group, it would be acceptable for the Lord Privy Seal to do so.

3. I have put the proposal to Lord Carrington. He still takes the view that, given the somewhat critical reaction to the Dublin Communique, it would not be in the best interests of Government policy on Northern Ireland if the Foreign and Commonwealth Office were to get involved to the degree proposed.

4. I do not think that we can get this matter any further until Lord Carrington gets back. Perhaps there could be a meeting between the Prime Minister and the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary early next week. That would just give us time to get a group set up to take delivery of the work of the officials before the meeting with the Irish arranged for 30th January. At a pinch I think we could in fact get through that first meeting with the Irish without there having been a meeting of the Ministerial Group; the instructions to the British team could be agreed in correspondence. The meeting is likely to be largely procedural, though of course there are political overtones even in the procedure in this business.

5. When a meeting is arranged, I will provide a comprehensive brief for the Prime Minister.

6. The Prime Minister should be aware that we are already beginning to have questions about the Studies. Mr. Ivor Stanbrook has asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland (for Answer on 15th January) to describe more fully the "institutional structures" referred to in the Dublin Communique. The draft reply reads:-



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"No Sir; it is one of the objects of the Joint Studies themselves to consider what possible new institutional structures might be devised as a means of ^{further} developing the unique relationship between this country and the Republic of Ireland."

(Robert Armstrong)

12th January 1981