

Ref: B06211

MR ALEXANDER

c Sir Robert Armstrong o/r

Prime Minister

Above the line at 'A'?

Yes no.

Amd - 29/5

Anglo-Irish Joint Studies

The Prime Minister's meeting on 13th May (your letter to Mr Walden of 14th May) approved ~~certain~~ negotiating texts to be given to the Irish Government (subject to certain drafting changes which have since been incorporated); but agreed that in view of the critical situation in Northern Ireland they should not actually be handed over for a week or so. On 18th May Sir Robert Armstrong told Mr Nally in the Taoiseach's office in Dublin that we would not be able to let them have any texts that week but would be doing so during the week beginning 25th May. Sir Robert also spoke to the Prime Minister, who was in principle content with this timetable.

A. 2. On 21st May Mr Haughey called a general election, which will be held on 11th June. In the light of this development Lord Carrington and Mr Atkins have reflected further on whether it is safe to let the Irish have these texts during their election campaign. They have concluded that we should seek to persuade the Irish that negotiations should now clearly wait till after the election and that there is therefore no need for us to hand over texts until then; but that if (as seems likely) the Irish do not rise to this and instead continue to press for the texts, we should not refuse to hand them over.

3. Provided the Prime Minister agrees with these conclusions, Sir Robert Armstrong or I will speak accordingly to Mr Nally on 1st June.

4. There is no sign so far that Mr Haughey intends to make trouble for us by misrepresenting during his election campaign what has been happening in the Joint Studies. If he were to decide to do that he would not be particularly handicapped by not having the texts we now propose to hand over. In their latest versions, as approved by Ministers, they are (as you will remember) extremely anodyne. And there would be a real risk of angering the Irish, and thereby prejudicing the future negotiating process, if after promising to hand over these texts this week we refused to do so <sup>even</sup> next week; whatever we said, it would be clear that we were expecting to be doublecrossed.

29th May 1981

R L WADE-GERY