

PRIME MINISTER

The Archbishop of Canterbury

I have had two private conversations with Dr Runcie (in the margins of other meetings) since his interview with The Times appeared in last Monday's paper. He said he hoped you accepted that he was trying to enunciate principles rather than to comment on specific policies, and hoped that you had not taken his remarks personally.

On Tuesday the Archbishop seemed somewhat baffled at the whole event: the interview had been fixed some weeks in advance and without specific reference to subject matter. Pressure on his diary had later caused it to be postponed by a week. He had apparently not realised the significance of the timing in relation to the Party Conference, nor had it occurred to him to let you know in advance that he would be making political comments.

On the Thursday Dr Runcie seemed more self-assured, and although he continued to say that he was not wishing to criticise the Government, he felt he was entitled to make such remarks "outside the pulpit" though he condemned churchmen who preached political sermons.

The Archbishop told me he was always very ready to come and see you (though any meeting might need to be arranged without attracting outside attention), but he felt that in the light of recent events he would rather not write any letters.

There is no need to react to this unless you wish.

12 October 1984

J.C.