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PRIME MINISTER

ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The Speaking Notes which Sir Robert Armstrong enclosed with his minute of 10 October (Ref A084/2701) are the product of inter-Departmental consultation and I am content that they should be used in the way he proposes at next week's meeting with Irish officials. I assume that Ministers will not be committed to any of these individual ideas until we can judge the proposed package in the round.

Paper 10 (Draft of a Joint Declaration) falls considerably short of what the Irish may consider acceptable but I do not think that we can go much further now without risk of a Unionist explosion. I would prefer to substitute the words "a substantial minority" for the words "many people" in sub-paragraph (ii).

As you know from our discussion I attach particular importance to the warning to the Irish in paper 6, paragraph 9 that an amendment to their constitution even if it could be achieved would not in itself be likely to secure Unionist acquiescence in the other steps proposed unless accompanied by some progress towards majority rule with safeguards for the minority.

I am considering urgently how I might handle discussions with Northern Ireland political leaders between now and 19 November and will send you my proposals early next week in the light of Sir Robert Armstrong's second minute of 10 October (Ref A084/2702).

I am copying this minute to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary, to Sir Robert Armstrong and to the others who received copies of Sir Robert Armstrong's minute.

Nidwand

for DH
12 October 1984

(Approved by the Secretary of State and signed in his absence at Brighton)

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