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bc: Sir P. Cradock

10 DOWNING STREET

*From the Private Secretary*

19 February 1986

PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH: SELLAFIELD

At the end of their meeting today, the Taoiseach raised with the Prime Minister the Irish Government's concern about incidents at Sellafield.

The Taoiseach said that, because of these incidents, he was under pressure to seek some action by HMG. A scientific paper shortly to be published would show that radiation pollution in and around Ireland was far greater than in virtually all other European countries. It seemed that information about earlier discharges or incidents at Sellafield, particularly that of 1953, had been suppressed. When people believed they had been misled, it inevitably caused alarm and suspicion. This might be unjustified but it existed and had to be dealt with. He wondered whether a system of monitoring under European auspices might be required.

The Prime Minister said that reports of incidents at Sellafield had been greatly exaggerated. Some 11,000 people worked there safely and securely. Very large sums were being spent on improvements at Sellafield. The level of liquid discharges into the Irish Sea had already been greatly reduced and would be reduced further still by the early 1990s. There was no case for introducing a European inspection force; this had been considered at a Euratom meeting in November 1985 and rejected with the endorsement of the Irish representative present. She would write to the Taoiseach setting out the facts about Sellafield in full.

It was agreed that the press should be told that the Taoiseach had explained the concern felt in Ireland about recent incidents at Sellafield. The Prime Minister had undertaken to let the Taoiseach have a full response.

I should be grateful for a draft letter setting out the full facts about Sellafield, suitable for publication, as soon as possible.

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I am copying this letter to Geoff Dart (Department of Energy), Robin Young (Department of the Environment), Jim Daniell (Northern Ireland Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

Charles Powell

Colin Budd, Esq.,  
Foreign and Commonwealth Office.