



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON.

17 Grosvenor Place

London SW1X 7HR

*SE PC*

*ED*

26 March 1986

Dear Private Secretary

I am enclosing herewith a letter addressed to the Prime Minister, The Rt Hon Mrs Margaret Thatcher MP, from the Taoiseach Dr Garret FitzGerald TD.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to bring the letter to the attention of the Prime Minister.

*Yours sincerely  
Noel Dorr*

Noel Dorr  
Ambassador

Mr Charles Powell  
Private Secretary to the Prime Minister  
10 Downing Street  
London SW1

Enc.



Env Affairs: Sellafield July 80.



PRIME MINISTER'S  
PERSONAL MESSAGE  
SERIAL No. T61/86



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Office of the Taoiseach

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*Prime Minister*

*CDP  
20/3.*

*24* March, 1986.

The Right Honourable Margaret Thatcher, M.P., F.R.S.,  
Prime Minister,  
10 Downing Street,  
London.

*ms*

Dear Margaret,

Thank you for your letter of ~~6~~ March about Sellafield, arising from our meeting on 19 February when I expressed the concern about the plant felt in Ireland and urged that there should be a review of the safety procedures at the plant. I have noted the information you gave on the reduction in discharges to the sea and atmosphere over recent years and that substantial investment is being undertaken which will further reduce discharges. I have also taken note of the assessments of the radiological significance of recent incidents at the plant, of the provisional conclusions of the NRPB in regard to the effect of the new information about discharges in the 1950s on the findings of the Black Committee and of the points made about the Chapelcross and Calder Hall Power Stations.

My Government have at all times kept a clear perspective on questions arising in regard to Sellafield. The evidence available to date from our own monitoring of the sea and air has indicated that discharges including the recent





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incidents, have not, up to this point, caused significant radioactive pollution of either sea or air. Our position on recent incidents and disclosures has been, as I indicated when we met, that notwithstanding that the former may be described as of negligible radiological significance, the number of incidents within a short time and the revelation that information in relation to discharges in the 1950s given to the Black Committee was inaccurate by a substantial factor raise doubts and give rise to concern about the operation and management of the plant. This attitude should be seen in the context of the position we have consistently taken that, through necessary investment and use of the best available technology, discharges should be minimised in accordance with the ALARA principle and totally eliminated as soon as possible.

The public concern in Ireland which I conveyed to you when we met has continued unabated with both ordinary and special notice questions in the Dail, debates there and in the Senate, numerous resolutions and statements of concern by local authorities and widespread expressions of disquiet by members of the general public. The recent report by the House of Commons Environment Committee has added to public anxiety here. My Government therefore welcomed the decision by the Health and Safety Executive to undertake the examination of the reprocessing plant to which you refer in your letter and the fact that the findings will be made public. We also welcome the request by your Government to COMARE to assess the health significance of the new





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information about discharges in the 1950s: I note that the Committee expects to complete its report within a matter of months and that it will be published.

I appreciate your assurance that neither the United Kingdom Government nor the British industry are complacent. My colleagues and I also appreciate the improved arrangements made for prompt notification of incidents involving radiological emissions or discharges under which we received practically immediate notification of recent incidents at Sellafield and elsewhere. It is therefore no reflection on the goodwill of the U.K. authorities concerned that we remain of the view I conveyed to you that we would wish to see a monitoring process carried out under European Community auspices. I have told the Dail that we would seek Ministerial discussions in Brussels with a view to proposing a European inspection force which would monitor activities such as the reprocessing at Sellafield.

The matter was accordingly raised by our Minister for the Environment, Mr. John Boland, T.D., at the meeting of the Environment Council of the Community on 6 March, where it became clear that the concern in Ireland is shared by other Member States. My colleague referred to the widespread acknowledgement that there is a communications gap between the nuclear industry and the man in the street and to the positive value a European agency would have in being seen to be totally independent of the industry or of governments





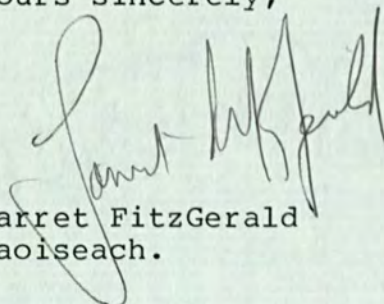
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and thus reassuring public opinion in a sensitive area. Advance notice of the intention to raise the matter was given to Mr. William Waldegrave. In his contribution to the discussion, he expressed appreciation for the way in which the matter had been handled by the Irish delegation and said that he would be happy to continue co-operation with our authorities in dealing with the situation.

My Government welcome this response. I have no doubt that we can expect continuing close co-operation between our two Governments, as this matter is considered further in bilateral contacts between Ministers concerned and by the appropriate organs of the European Communities, with a view to ensuring the highest possible standards of safety and protection for the peoples and environments on both sides of the Irish Sea and further afield.

Yours sincerely,



Garret FitzGerald  
Taoiseach.



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