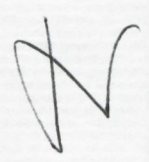


- 1. MR POWELL
- 2. MR WICKS
- 3. PRIME MINISTER

Prime Minister
 CDP
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Attached is an H paper by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland proposing that candidates at Northern Ireland Assembly and District Council elections should be asked to sign a declaration that they do not support terrorist methods in furthering their cause. He is proposing to proceed by way of a consultation paper "at the right political moment". The paper is due to be taken at H on 10 April.

The Lord President is intending to have a word with you about this proposal during his regular bilateral next Tuesday, before H has discussed the paper. The proposal has obvious attractions but there are implications for electoral law in general in imposing "loyalty oaths" as a requirement for seeking election. There will also be problems in making the requirement stick without mobilising more support for Sinn Fein e.g. it would be argued that, having urged everyone concerned to use the democratic process, the Government is moving the goal-posts to ensure that support for Sinn Fein cannot be expressed through the ballot box.



Tim Flesher

2 April 1986

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 CDP
 6/4.