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SECRET AND PERSONAL

PRIME MINISTER

OD(I)

The purpose of the meeting is to decide whether to hand over formally the revised text to the Irish side. When you looked at it quickly the other day, you had problems with two points:

- (i) the proposal to call the "Standing Committee" instead the "Standing Joint Committee". This is a very poor proposal since it conjures up joint authority etc. The Cabinet Office brief suggests some alternatives.

- (ii) Irish right to be consulted on economic and social matters. You did not like the alternative idea of allowing them to be consulted on proposals for legislation and on major policy issues. The Cabinet Office brief proposes as an alternative:"...proposals for Orders in Council affecting Northern Ireland and on major policy issues concerning "transferred" matters ..."

The Northern Ireland Secretary still has reservations about an Irish Office in Belfast: and may suggest that the Agreement have a review mechanism.

If the text is agreed, you may like to discuss the timing of further negotiations. Although there is some risk that areas of agreement may unravel if we drag out negotiations too long, it is hardly realistic to think of sewing up an agreement before the marching season begins in July. The target might therefore be September/October.

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You will want to consider at what stage to brief Cabinet. The choice is to do it after the Recess (6 June): or wait until we have a better idea of Irish Ministerial reaction to our latest proposal.

EDP

22 May, 1985

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