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cc PS / PUS (L) 4/9/85  
Mr Stephens  
Mr Brennan  
Mr Chesterton  
Mr Bell  
PS/Mr Bloomfield

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MR POWELL

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HEAD OF THE  
CIVIL SERVICE

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

Thank you for your minute of 24 September about a possible draft message to Mr McFarlane.

2. I attach a speaking note for the Prime Minister to use when she sees Mr McFarlane on 28 September.

3. I am sending copies of this minute and the speaking note to the Private Secretaries to the Foreign and Commonwealth Secretary and the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.

RET

ROBERT ARMSTRONG

25 September 1985

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SPEAKING NOTE FOR THE PRIME MINISTER TO USE WITH MR MCFARLANE

Anglo-Irish Relations: Northern Ireland

As you will know, negotiations are taking place between the British and Irish Governments about a possible agreement concerning Northern Ireland. Neither Government has yet taken a decision of principle on whether to conclude an agreement, but considerable progress has been made at official level, and it is very possible, subject to further progress, that an agreement could be signed by the Prime Minister and the Taoiseach around the end of October.

2. There is of course no question in a single agreement at this time of solving all the problems of Northern Ireland. The agreement envisaged consists essentially of two elements:

a. A recognition by the Irish Government that the constitutional status of Northern Ireland as part of the United Kingdom can be changed only with the consent of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland, and that the present wish of the majority of the people of Northern Ireland is that it should continue to be part of the United Kingdom.

b. The two Governments would create, within the framework of the existing Anglo-Irish Intergovernmental Council, a new body, which might be called the "Standing Conference", in which the Irish Government could put forward to the British Government views and proposals on security matters in Northern Ireland, and on certain political, legal, economic and social matters in Northern Ireland, and determined efforts would be made to resolve differences.

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There would be no <sup>delegation</sup> ~~delegation~~ from sovereignty of either the United Kingdom Government or the Irish Government, so that each would retain responsibility for the administration of government within its own jurisdiction.

3. There is some reason to believe that the SDLP, the constitutional representatives of the majority community in Northern Ireland, would be content with such an agreement and would as a result of it be willing to enter into discussion with the British Government and the other parties concerned on possible arrangements for devolution in Northern Ireland.

4. The British and Irish Governments believe that such an agreement would represent a modest but useful step forward, benefiting both communities in Northern Ireland as well as relations between the British and Irish Governments. It would be a demonstration that the two Governments can and will work together, within the constraints of what is possible, to reassure and improve the confidence of both communities in Northern Ireland and promote greater peace and stability there.

5. I understand that as a result of preliminary talks with people in the Administration and in the Congress the Irish Government believe that the United States would be likely to welcome an agreement of the kind being negotiated. A strong statement of welcome by the President would give me great pleasure, as I know it would give the Taoiseach, and I am sure that it would help to increase the chances of success for the proposed agreement.

6. The agreement would commit the two Governments to working together to promote economic and social progress in both parts of Ireland and to encourage dialogue and reconciliation there; and to considering the possibility of external support to this end. We have heard that the United States Government might consider reinforcing their support for the agreement by giving a

considerable amount of money for this purpose. If the United States Government did decide to respond in this way, the British and Irish Governments might set up a fund to receive and administer the monies provided. We have some preliminary ideas about how such a fund might operate. But both Governments would attach importance to it being seen that American generosity was a freely offered response to an agreement and not an inducement provided in order to encourage the two Governments to conclude an agreement.

7. I understand that a representative of the Irish Government is suggesting to Speaker O'Neill that he should discuss the question of United States support for an Anglo-Irish agreement with the President. I wanted you to know that we are aware of this approach to the Speaker and to confirm that we think it would be most helpful if American support for an Anglo-Irish agreement were to be expressed in an early statement by the Administration, and in due course reinforced by a financial gesture on the lines suggested.

8. The success of an agreement will depend very much on careful presentation. Both Governments are therefore extremely keen to prevent elements in the agreement from becoming public in advance since that would make it impossible to present the whole agreement in a balanced manner, if and when it was concluded. The content of the proposed agreement and the discussions which surround it have therefore been restricted to a very few people, though there has inevitably been a good deal of more or less ill-informed speculation. We should be most grateful if this could also be kept as close as possible in Washington.

9. If the two Governments do decide to go ahead with an agreement, we shall of course wish to give you more detail about it in advance, and (if you thought that would be helpful) the Taoiseach and I could probably send special emissaries to

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Washington for this purpose, certainly after the announcement of an agreement if not before.

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