

*For information of Secretary of State for Northern Ireland.*

STATEMENT ISSUED BY THE CHURCH OF IRELAND HOUSE OF BISHOPS

ON 20th NOVEMBER 1985

The House of Bishops of the Church of Ireland, shares with all people of goodwill in this island, north and south, the desire to see peace and mutual understanding develop and strengthen.

We acknowledge that the purpose of those involved in the formulation of the Anglo-Irish Agreement is an attempt to deal with long-standing political and community divisions but we also recognise the anxieties and deep frustrations that many people feel concerning the eventual outworking of the Agreement and its potential repercussions.

We are acutely aware that many people feel that major decisions involving their vital interests have been made in secret without full and open consultation with those most directly affected. Such a process inevitably creates resentment, and deepens division and mistrust. We would strongly urge the political leaders involved in the Agreement to take very seriously the sense of insecurity and lack of trust that arises for future relationships and structures.

In the coming weeks and months the Anglo Irish Agreement will be the subject of searching scrutiny and earnest debate in many places and at many levels. This necessary debate should be carried out in a manner that refrains from inflammatory words or actions. Such words or actions can only have the effect of increasing bitterness, division and suffering in a land where during the past sixteen years we have at a pastoral level ministered to so many people in their pain and grief.

As part of our pastoral responsibility as Bishops of the Church of Ireland we intend to seek early meetings with the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland to express our views on the Agreement.

We pray, and ask others to join with us in praying, that all may have a sound judgment in this matter and contribute to a more peaceful, co-operative and stable relationship between all people of goodwill in this island.