

CDP 5/x. 27

~~PRIME MINISTER~~

MEETING OF MINISTERS: 5 OCTOBER
ANGLO-IRISH RELATIONS: NORTHERN IRELAND

The purpose is to agree instructions for Robert Armstrong on the handling of further talks with the Irish Government on Northern Ireland in the run-up to the Anglo-Irish Summit in mid-November.

You commented on Robert Armstrong's account of the last round: "They are trying to go too fast. In view of my last visit to Dublin, the unionists will be particularly suspicious of this one." You added that the Anglo-Irish Summit in mid-November would be "too soon" for a full report to Ministers.

Robert Armstrong has now explained in more detail (please see attached note) what he regards as a feasible goal for the Summit. In essence, it is a report to the Summit of the outline of a possible package with Ministers being asked, not to agree it, but only whether it is sufficiently on the right lines to justify further work.

Questions which you might put to the meeting are:

- (i) Is the objective for the Summit set out in Robert Armstrong's minute of 3 October feasible?
Or does it still go too far too fast?
- (ii) What will be the Unionist reaction to the general statement of objectives proposed for the Summit?
Is there something which can be offered to them at the same time?

- (iii) Is it really feasible, as the Taoiseach wants, to have a package agreed and in being before the Northern Ireland local elections next May? *No*
- (iv) If it is decided that work needs to be slowed down, how is this to be presented to the Irish Government without leading it to lose interest altogether?
- (v) Are Ministers content with the emerging shape of the package as it appears from Robert Armstrong's minute of 24 September, also enclosed?

A decision is also needed on whether you will go to Ireland for the Summit. Your comment above suggests that you are resigned to this! The Irish are now suggesting Ashford Castle where President Reagan stayed.

CDP

4 October 1984