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London SW1A 2AH

See attached list for distribution

24 January 1990

BRITISH-IRISH INTERPARLIAMENTARY BODY

1. You will wish to be aware that the recently established British-Irish Interparliamentary Body is due to hold its first plenary meeting in London, 26-28 February.

2. The idea of the Body stems from the Joint Studies commissioned by the Prime Minister and Mr Haughey (then, as now, Irish Taoiseach) in 1980. These suggested that "it would be a natural and desirable development to establish a new intergovernmental body to be complemented at an appropriate moment by the development of an interparliamentary body". From the outset the latter was intended to cover the full range of Anglo-Irish affairs, not merely Northern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Agreement signed in November 1985 stated (article 12) "it will be for parliamentary decision in Westminster and in Dublin, whether to establish an Anglo-Irish Parliamentary Body of the kind adumbrated ... The two Governments agree that they would support such a body if it were established."

3. Following contacts under IPU auspices, both before and after the Anglo-Irish Agreement was signed, arrangements for the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body were agreed in Spring 1989. Membership is limited to 25 a side (British membership attached). Two of the British seats are being left vacant until the last moment in the hope that Northern Ireland Unionists will take them up. If they do not do so, one Government and one Opposition Associate will come in. PPSs and junior Opposition spokesmen are included.

4. During its formative period the Lord President has had formal responsibility for the Body. Once established, however, it will work under British IPU auspices. But the FCO will be responsible for the co-ordination of briefing for British members. This will be unclassified and unattributable, but give full background to HMG's policy. It would need to append key statements or other documents.

5. We hope that the Agenda for the February session will be drawn up very shortly. It is likely to be wide ranging and many Whitehall Departments will have an interest. As soon as the Agenda is available I shall commission briefing. I thought you might wish to be forewarned; some briefing may be required at very short notice.

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6. I am not sure if you are the correct departmental point of contact for this briefing material. If you are not, please could you let me know to whom our requests should go.

D Holt

D Holt
Parliamentary Relations Unit

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BRITISH-IRISH INTER-PARLIAMENTARY BODY

Government:

MEMBERS: Tony Baldry MP *Reading*
Michael Brown MP *Reading*
James Couchman MP *Gillingham*
Hugh Dykes MP *Havering*
Andrew MacKay MP *Perthshire*
Michael Mates MP *Stratford*
Norman Miscampbell QC MP *Stratford*
Sir David Mitchell MP *Stratford*
Barry Porter MP *Stratford*
Sir Giles Shaw MP *Stratford*
Peter Temple-Morris MP *Stratford*
Tim Wood MP *Stratford*

Lord Lyell

ASSOCIATES: Henry Bellingham MP
Edward Leigh MP
David Madel MP
William Benyon MP
Jeremy Hanley MP

Opposition:

MEMBERS: Stuart Bell MP *Midlothian*
Martin Flannery MP *Midlothian*
Roy Hughes MP *Northampton*
James Marshall MP *Leicester*
John McFall MP *Stratford*
Rt Hon Stanley Orme MP *Salisbury*
Rt Hon Merlyn Rees PC MP *Worcester*

Lord Prys-Davies

ASSOCIATES: Lord Blease of Cromac
Baroness Ewart-Biggs
Mrs Llin Golding MP
David Winnick MP

Liberal Democrats:

MEMBER: Alexander Carlile QC MP *Worcester*

ASSOCIATE: Lord Dunleath

SDLP:

MEMBER: Seamus Mallon MP *Down*

ASSOCIATE: Eddie McGrady MP *Down*