

*File*  
*John*

From: John Holmes

Date: 23 July 1997

PRIME MINISTER

NORTHERN IRELAND

We spoke briefly about where things have got to. I attach the joint statement issued by both Governments after the vote today. As I said, this leaves all options open. The Irish remain reluctant to agree to establishing the Independent Commission now, but we are continuing to press them. You might sign a letter to Ahern in the next day or so, and speak to him thereafter.

Meanwhile the NIO are very unhappy about the idea of you showing Trimble any kind of draft letter, as the attached NIO letter makes clear. I have told the NIO that their letter shows a distinct bias. They appear to be worrying excessively about upsetting the Irish Government and Sinn Fein, and taking little account of the concerns of the Unionists. That said, I think they are right that sending Trimble a draft letter now is dangerous.

Content for me to tell Trimble, as we discussed, that in the light of further reflection and discussions, you would prefer to go through it all with him orally first on Wednesday?

*John*

JOHN HOLMES

f/n ireland kk

*Oh but we really want to keep it & thinking there is something on the way*