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Immigration

Prime Minister

PRIME MINISTER

MT.

MP 25/2

Edward Gardner, Jock Bruce-Gardyne, Neil Thorne, Tristan Garel-Jones, Robert Cranbourne and John Ward came to see me recently to urge that citizens of the Irish Republic resident here should no longer enjoy the right to vote at our elections. I undertook to let you have their views.

Their immediate objective was to try to persuade me that the Nationality Bill should include a provision disfranchising Irish citizens living here, but I think that they now accept that it would not be appropriate to use this Bill to make such a change in our electoral arrangements. They made it clear, however, that they attach much importance to this matter and that they do not believe that it would affect our relations with the Republic. Finally, they asked me to let you know that they intend to continue to press for this and that they would not regard reciprocity (which they fear might emerge from the present joint Anglo-Irish talks) as an acceptable alternative.

I am sending a copy of this minute to the Lord Privy Seal, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, the Chief Whip and Sir Robert Armstrong.

hw

24 February 1981