



Foreign and Commonwealth Office

London SW1A 2AH

19 February 1986

*Dear Charles,*Prime Minister's Meeting with Taoiseach: 19 February

We understand that the Department of Energy has been asked for general briefing on Sellafield to enable the Prime Minister to reply to requests from any quarter for the closure of the plant. But they will not be briefing on a possible Irish proposal for a European inspection force to monitor Sellafield since this is a matter for the Department of the Environment. The Prime Minister may therefore wish to have to hand the enclosed supplementary brief which we have obtained from the Department of the Environment.

I am copying this letter to Jim Daniell (NIO), David Morris (Lord Privy Seal's Office) and Michael Stark (Cabinet Office).

*Yours ever,**Colin Budd*

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Private Secretary

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PRIME MINISTER'S MEETING WITH THE TAOISEACH : 19 FEBRUARY

Dr FitzGerald's Objectives

(g) to press for major reductions in levels of radioactive discharges from Sellafield. To question the reliability of BNFL management in light of recent accidents.

Your Response

(g) we are aware of your concern; recent incidents have been played up by the press - they are in fact relatively minor. Major reductions in liquid discharges into the Irish Sea have been achieved over the last 7 years and more are planned as the new sections of plant are brought into operation. By early 1990's anticipated beta/gamma activity will be reduced to around 5% of 1979 levels. BNFL management and staff have our confidence. British nuclear industry as a whole has an unparalleled record for industrial safety.

EUROPEAN INSPECTION FORCE

Dr FitzGerald's Objective

(h) (possibly) to suggest that a European inspection force should be set up to monitor Sellafield.

Your Response

(h) we are satisfied that we have adequate regulation and monitoring systems. The November 1985 meeting convened under the Euratom Treaty endorsed this view. (We are arranging for BNFL's report on the incident on 23 January to be sent to Irish officials.)

Background

1. Annual discharges of alpha activity from Sellafield have been reduced from 68.0 TBqs in 1978 to 5.7 TBqs in 1985, while annual discharges of beta/gamma activity (other than tritium) have fallen from 7122.5 TBqs in 1978 to 586.0 TBqs in 1985. Three major new plants (SIXEP, Salt Evaporator and Pond 5 at Sellafield) are currently being brought into commission and when fully operational significant further reductions should be achieved. Additionally, the floc precipitation plant which is now under construction is due to become operational in the early 1990's and it is anticipated that this will lead to a further reduction of discharges to less than 9.7 TBqs per year of alpha and about 300 TBqs of beta/gamma activity (other than tritium).
2. Prime Minister will be aware that the present Chairman and Chief Executive, Mr Allday, retires on 31 March. He is to be replaced by Mr Christopher Harding as Chairman, and Mr Neville Chamberlain as Chief Executive. Mr Allday is 65 and is retiring in the normal way.

EUROPEAN INSPECTION FORCEBackground

1. Proposals for a European inspection force have been considered previously; most recently as a result of a debate on Sellafield in the European Parliament in September 1985. A meeting of experts convened under Article 31 of Euratom in November 1985 held that such a force was not required. This view was endorsed by the Irish representative at the meeting.

He →

