



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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For HQ
For A/Sec O hUiginn

From London
From Hayes

cc Joint Secretary

5/11/92

Commons debate on Maastricht

We were in the Commons for yesterday's debate and last night's vote. Afterwards a number of people, including the four SDLP, came back to the house and the following comments will give you a flavour of events.

The OUP voted for the Labour amendment and against the Government motion. Martin Smyth missed the vote being absent on a trip somewhere. Paradoxically despite the speculation the OUP seem to have come under less pressure than the SDLP. It seems that the Tory Whips calculated that, on Maastricht at least, there was little point in trying to do business with the OUP. Taylor, who was the only OUP member to speak in the debate, made clear what would have been involved when he reminded the House that in the General Election the OUP were the only party which spelt out in its manifesto its opposition to Maastricht.

We know, however, that Richard Needham met with several of them in the course of the day and in his capacity as Minister of State at the DTI offered a number of inducements. At one stage he told the Whips office that, given more time, he might have been able to persuade one or two (possibly Beggs and Walker) to break ranks and abstain. Mates is also said to have made approaches and at a lower level Michael Brown and David Lightbown, the NI Whip, were also active in trying to pressurise them. (Lightbown was so busy in his whipping role that he failed to make it into the lobbies for the vote on the Government motion and much to his embarrassment is identified as an abstainer. His absence reduced the Government majority to three on the second vote.)

I should add that on the question of the Select Committee Mallon, McNamara and others feel that one way or another this is becoming an increasingly likely prospect. Mallon, for example, is of the view that Mayhew with various nods and winks has more or less promised it to Molyneux.

The SDLP had a difficult day yesterday. From what I can gather it seems that the Government got wind of Hume's difference of opinion with the Labour Whips on Tuesday evening when he had told them that they should not count on the SDLP's vote. Hume met with John Smith yesterday afternoon and told him that the SDLP could not vote for the Labour motion. He agreed, however, that he would abstain and vote against the Government motion. Subsequently Mallon and McGrady

persuaded him that it would be politically suicidal to do anything other than support the Labour motion. Abstention would cause a serious rift in relations with Labour and would be a shot in the arm for the campaign for Labour representation in NI. Hume finally conceded the point and all four voted with the OUP and DUP in support of the Labour motion and against the Government.

Throughout the evening, right up to the vote, Hume and Hendron, in particular, came under intense pressure from the Government. Needham met with both and made them extravagant promises on job creation projects in Derry and West Belfast. According to Hume he was offered a meeting with the Prime Minister and Michael Heseltine, President of the Board of Trade was ready to talk to Hendron.

I should mention in passing that Paisley, the only other Unionist apart from Taylor to speak in the debate, attacked Bill Clinton's proposals for a special peace envoy. He said "the new President should keep out of Northern Ireland affairs. After all, his own State of Arkansas is one of the two states of America that have no civil rights legislation. Let him put his own house in order before he comes to Northern Ireland to set our house in order." He asked Tristan Garel-Jones, the Minister of State at the FCO, who was then holding the fort on the front bench, to convey this message to the Foreign Secretary.