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IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

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The Party Conferences: Labour

Dear Assistant Secretary,

The Labour party conference takes place in Brighton from 26 to 30 September. The motions for debate have just become available and I attach copies of those pertaining to Northern Ireland. As you can see they are heavily dominated by the issue of Labour representation in Northern Ireland and the future direction of Labour policy.

McNamara has not yet returned from leave. When he does he will be confronted by problems on several fronts. In the first instance there is talk of a campaign to have him ousted from the spokesman's job. This will be nothing new to him. In the lead up to the 1991 conference for example it was widely rumoured that Kinnock was about to give the job to Harriet Harman, then shadow spokesperson on Health. McNamara confounded his critics and increased his Shadow Cabinet vote. This time around however the threat is somewhat more significant and the villain of the piece has considerably more credibility.

On this occasion the challenge is said to come from Marjorie Mowlam, the highly effective Shadow spokesperson on Women and the Citizens Charter. Ms Mowlam, or "Mo" as she is best known, served for a brief period as McNamara's number three before being moved by Kinnock to the Treasury team where her considerable talents could be put to more effective use. She was replaced by Roger Stott, a move which said all that needs to be said about the priority which the Labour leadership attaches to Northern Ireland.

During the summer break Labour's Tribune newspaper carried an article attacking McNamara and pressing Mo Mowlam's claims as the most credible candidate for the Northern Ireland job. The author of this piece is apparently a member of Democracy Now, the lobbying group campaigning for Labour representation in Northern Ireland. Mowlam, who is genuinely fond of McNamara, sought to telephone him to tell him that she had nothing to do

with the article and assure him of her support. According to our sources she failed to reach him since he had departed on a European holiday. She was obliged instead to relay her message of comfort to his deputy, the Honourable Member for Wigan, Mr Stott.

That same evening apparently she received a telephone call from Gary Kent, a leading member of New Consensus and Democracy Now. Kent told Mowlam that she needed some behind the scenes support and he offered his services suggesting as a first step the release to the media of a short statement deploring the Tribune article and stressing that a change in Shadow portfolios was a matter for John Smith following the Shadow Cabinet elections. Mowlam refused this dubious offer but it has convinced McNamara's supporters who got to hear of it that Democracy Now is actively working to push McNamara aside. U

Unfortunately for McNamara there is plenty of evidence to suggest that they may well be right in this assessment. Democracy Now are certainly building up very considerable momentum in advance of the Brighton Conference. I attach as an example of this an invitation which we have received here to their conference reception, printed on quality paper and sponsored by no less an organ than the Daily Mirror, a striking example of the malign influence of the Mirror's new editor, David Montgomery. The group have already started lobbying for a Conference debate on Northern Ireland which, if they succeed, will of course be dominated by their call for Labour representation in Northern Ireland.

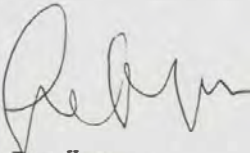
Unlike previous groups who have campaigned for Labour representation in Northern Ireland, Democracy Now is no single issue movement dominated by strident malcontents. Their agenda is more broadly based embracing the New Consensus movement and including for example a demand for the abolition of Articles 2 and 3. It is of course Unionist to the core although many of those supporting it, including some MPs, are unaware of what it really stands for. As they did at last years conference they will seek to dominate the Conference debate on Northern Ireland, packing the fringe meetings, heckling McNamara, distributing vast quantities of damaging literature, lobbying delegates and generally working tirelessly to shift the tide of opinion in their favour. McNamara is unlikely to be in a position to do much in reply. His team has commenced work on a draft conference speech aware that a poor performance could be critical for him. Sadly the type of effort required seems beyond the capabilities of Amanda Francis, McNamara's research assistant. She has taken to bouts of self recrimination and weeping, has fallen out with Tom Lyne, her predecessor, and seems resigned to a sharp drop in McNamara's Shadow Cabinet vote. U

Even more ominously we have some evidence suggesting that former allies may be deserting McNamara. Jim Marshall, his former number 2 and the co author of the paper on Labour options for joint authority has I understand written privately to John Smith stating his view that the spokesman on Northern

Ireland should be a member of the Shadow Cabinet in his own right. This would of course automatically exclude McNamara who has consistently failed to get elected to that body. There are also signs that the newest recruit to Smith's office, Pat McFadden, the Donegal man who worked for many years with Murray Elder, the head of Smith's private office, is quietly canvassing views for a successor to McNamara.

The threat to McNamara can of course be easily overstated. As he has on many previous occasions, he may well cling on and could indeed even improve his showing in the Shadow Cabinet elections judiciously turning the threat against him to his advantage. There is no doubt that he was until very recently held in good standing by John Smith, on a personal level at least. His confidence and performance had also greatly improved relative to his days under Kinnock. His handling of the leaked document on joint sovereignty did not help him however and this was greatly compounded by the publication just before the summer recess of his ill considered and ill timed counter attack on Labour representation in Northern Ireland, the pamphlet "Oranges or Lemons". One way or another he badly needs to re-assert himself at Brighton, deliver a cracking good Conference speech, prevent Democracy Now from setting the agenda and lobbying hard for support in the Shadow Cabinet elections. He can be certain that despite her protestations of support and affection Mo Mowlam - and several others - will be watching closely.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Hayes
Counsellor