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BÉALFEIRSTE

BELFAST

"Newsbreak", Radio Ulster, 1 pm,  
Wednesday, 28 July, 1993

Interviewer: "I didn't set a price or strike a sordid bargain". Well, that's what Jim Molyneaux told Newsbreak when questioned this morning about the alleged Conservative/Unionist deal. Ever since the Unionists backed John Major over Maastricht last week there has been speculation about what the Government might have delivered to ensure this vital backing. Mr. Major's adamant "nothing was asked for, nothing was offered, nothing was given", has not convinced everyone by any means and there is a front-page story in the Independent this morning with the headline "Major's pact with Unionists exposed". So before we came on air I asked Mr. Molyneaux to clarify his position.

Mr. Molyneaux: Well we are a responsible party, the fourth party in Parliament. We took the responsible view in compliance with the guidelines which we set ourselves as far back as the time when I became leader of the party in 1974, leader in Parliament, which was and I reiterate it, that provided that Her Majesty's Government of the day whatever its complexion acts in the best interests of the United Kingdom in general and of Northern Ireland in particular we will not see any justification for terminating the life of the Parliament prematurely. That's Parliament, not Government, necessarily.

Interviewer: You were mocked by Dr. Paisley (Molyneaux laughs) because he said if nothing was asked for, nothing was offered and nothing was given, how come the Ulster Unionists betrayed their manifesto pledge over Maastricht?

Mr. Molyneaux: Well, Mr. Paisley has heard me reiterate that formula that I have just repeated to you. He knows the full meaning of that, the answer lies in that formula.

Interviewer: So are you saying that the atmosphere hasn't improved to the extent that you couldn't expect more from the

Conservatives now than you could have done say a couple of years ago?

Mr. Molyneaux: I never suggested that there was going to be any dramatic happenings. That's the reason why the Prime Minister was able to stand up at the dispatch box and reply to Mr. Mallon who walked into the trap of course as usual, asked a question which if he had thought about it he shouldn't have asked. The Prime Minister gave the answer, nothing was asked for, nothing was conceded, that's fair enough, I knew that answer would be given.

Interviewer: Well what about a Select Committee, I mean is that going to happen?

Mr. Molyneaux: Well, the Select Committee you see is something which has a mind of its own. It's not something which should be the subject of a bargaining operation because there is no justification for withholding and denying a Select Committee from only one remaining Department of State, namely the Northern Ireland Office. It's not even Northern Ireland we are talking about, its simply that the Northern Ireland Department is the only Department in Whitehall which is not supervised by a Select Committee. Now, I think that the citizens of Northern Ireland, whatever their political views feel surely that in line with the Irish News leader this morning that it would be to their advantage to have Government called to account for everything they do in Northern Ireland.

Interviewer: But you are not going to tell me whether you think we are going to get a Committee or not?

Mr. Molyneaux: Well, I am telling you that it has a mind of its own. The Select Committee on Procedure has been working steadily towards it. There was a brief delay in it and they took account of that in their report which was debated in Parliament if you remember about eighteen months ago where they said that they took account of the fact that talks were under way at that time in Northern Ireland and that it might

be prudent to await the result of those talks before they moved, but they said it cannot be denied for ever.

Interviewer: Some people listening to all this Mr. Molyneux will surmise that there was an agreement, an arrangement with the Conservatives, but you are not going to embarrass them by saying that in so many words?

Mr. Molyneux: Well, my attitude was that there shouldn't be any sort of dirty deals, squalid deals done over this, that and the other, least of all security and that was implied mind you by the news industry and the idea that we were wheeling and dealing over peoples lives was quite repulsive and I don't conduct affairs like that. I have looked at and listened to as you have John Major's statements during the election regarding the Union where he listed the four component parts of the Kingdom and said on several occasions that if any one departed or withdrew that all would be poorer for the withdrawal. He has never in any way retreated from that position, in fact in recent days, in recent weeks and months he has been stepping it up.

Interviewer: Now there was a great deal made of the telephone call that you had with the Prime Minister prior to the vote in Maastricht. One report said you actually had a meeting with him. Did you meet him personally as well, and was it worthwhile the meeting, I mean what you're telling me if I am to believe you is you didn't get anything out of it?

Mr. Molyneux: Well, it was worthwhile because it was out of courtesy. I was asked if I would like to see the Prime Minister so I deferred it until I had consulted in various ways and thought things over and so forth, and then I had the meeting but it wasn't a question of clenching deals or anything as sordid as that.

Interviewer: The Ulster Unionist Leader Jim Molyneux.