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**Reference Code:** 2021/48/159

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AMBASÁID NA HÉIREANN, LONDAIN



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*David*

29 September, 1994.

Mr. Seán O hUiginn,  
Assistant Secretary,  
Anglo-Irish Division,  
Department of Foreign Affairs,  
St. Stephen's Green,  
DUBLIN 2.

*cc PS7  
PSS to Finlay  
to Minnoway  
to Newell  
Mr. Dolton*

*John W. to  
Ellis, A-I  
Mr. J. Finlay*

Dear Assistant Secretary,

Tánaiste's Meeting with Tony Blair

The Tánaiste's first meeting with Tony Blair, the new leader of the Labour Party, took place over breakfast at the Embassy on 23 September. Mr. Blair was accompanied by Pat McFadden, a member of his staff, whilst Fergus Finlay and the undersigned were with the Tánaiste. The following is a brief report of the discussion.

Labour Party Policy on Northern Ireland

After hearing the Tánaiste's account of developments since the IRA announcement of 31 August, and in particular the approach of the Irish Government to the new situation, Mr. Blair explained the reasoning behind his own support for the British Government's cautious attitude at this juncture. By backing the Government now he and his party would have more credibility if, at a later stage, they found it necessary to question or criticise Government policy. He spoke of a "once-off opportunity" to do that, if the need arises at all, and he indicated a willingness to be helpful to us in that regard if, in their view, the Government are not doing the right thing. The Tánaiste thanked him for that and assured him that as far as the Irish Government were concerned, the IRA ceasefire was permanent. Mr. Blair was interested in the draft framework document, including the manner and timing of its deployment and the Tánaiste briefed him accordingly.

Labour Party Conference

Asked how the Northern Ireland issue would be dealt with at the Labour Party Conference in early October, Mr. Blair said that the resolutions submitted pre-dated the IRA announcement

of 31 August. What they envisaged was a statement from the platform by the National Executive Committee (NEC) outlining party policy in the new situation. Such a statement would be drafted in advance and cleared by the NEC. It would take cognisance of the Joint Declaration, especially the principle of consent, as well as the new situation resulting from the IRA's ending of their campaign. Blair mentioned that John Hume had been invited to address the conference and had accepted. In response to a question about Democracy Now, the pressure group within Labour urging the Party to organise in Northern Ireland and field candidates there, Blair said he was not at all worried about them. He conveyed the impression that John Hume's proposed presence at and address to the conference was an answer to that question.

#### Dr. Paisley

The Labour Party leader informed the Tánaiste that Dr. Paisley had sought a meeting with him. Although no date had been set, the impression given was that Blair would acquiesce.

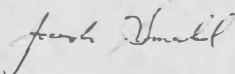
#### Ireland and the European Union

Blair raised this subject and seemed particularly interested in hearing the Tánaiste's views on EMU. The Tánaiste briefed him on this and also on the current healthy state of the Irish economy as well as our longer term economic prospects, pointing out that at the moment only Luxembourg and Ireland satisfied the criteria laid down by the Maastricht Treaty for monetary union.

#### Photocall and Press Conference

The meeting between the Tánaiste and Tony Blair attracted a good deal of media attention and a large number of photographers came to the Embassy. Although Blair's side did not want a press conference as such there were also some journalists present and both the Tánaiste and Mr. Blair took some questions from them. Asked whether his Party would wish to be a "persuader" for Irish unity the Labour leader stressed the need to "allow the wishes of the people of Ireland to be determined in accordance with the peace process". In response to a question from Bernard Purcell of the Irish Independent about the absence of Kevin McNamara, Blair said that Kevin was attending a family wedding.

Yours sincerely,

  
Joseph Small  
Ambassador

369/2

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29 September 1994

Confidential

Mr Sean O hUiginn  
Assistant Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Assistant Secretary

Meeting with Kevin McNamara MP

I had dinner on the evening of 27 September with Kevin McNamara. As you know, Kevin has been off the scene since the beginning of September because of family weddings in Hull and a two-week holiday in Kerry in the middle of the month. He returned to Hull yesterday morning and will re-enter the political scene with a speech in West Belfast tomorrow which I learn from other sources will be at a conference on policing organised by Queens University.

John Hume's attendance at the Party Conference

Kevin mentioned that he has urged John Hume to attend the Party Conference and that this will for obvious reasons be helpful in shaping the course of discussion at the Conference - especially because it demonstrates the weak position within the Labour Party of those who take an integrationist line. Kevin has not however spoken to Hume about the contents of his intervention. The story in the Financial Times (Kevin Brown, 27 September) to the effect that Hume will "rally support" for McNamara is therefore misleading and unhelpful to Kevin in a Labour Party context. Kevin said that he would be very grateful to discover what John Hume intends to say in Blackpool and that it would be particularly useful, given that he himself will make the following speech, to have a written text.

Conference scenario

The scenario for the Ireland debate at Conference on 5 October is as follows:

- address by John Hume immediately after lunch
- tabling of National Executive Committee statement
- statement by McNamara from the platform (i.e., a 10-15 minute statement as opposed to the usual three minutes allowed to speakers)
- an open debate
- approval of a composite resolution based on those already on the order paper and of the NEC statement, which is expected to form the basis of Labour policy for the coming year

### NEC statement

The above scenario depends on agreement within the National Executive Committee which met yesterday afternoon (Wednesday) and will meet again on Sunday morning in Blackpool. The contents of the NEC statement are obviously of crucial importance. It is possible that a statement issued next week may guide Labour policy until the General Election.

Kevin told me that the statement has been drafted in Tony Blair's office on the basis of suggestions put by Kevin himself and emphasises the following points:

- \* Labour's aspiration to "unity by consent"
- \* the need for "a balanced constitutional settlement" and an "agreed Ireland"
- \* the settlement to involve appropriate cross-border institutions

Kevin was confident that there would be a comfortable majority in the National Executive for this approach. The problem would be if Blair brought in outside advisers such as Peter Mandelson MP to rework the statement before circulating it at the National Executive. Even then, some members of the Executive with whom Kevin has been in touch could be relied on to argue for the points listed above.

I learn this morning that in the event Tony Blair made no deletions from the draft as put to him but added one sentence to the effect that "the Downing Street Declaration has changed the context in which the peace process is being pursued". The National Executive has approved in principle the issuing of such a statement and will finalise the text at its meeting on Sunday morning. It has also given its blessing to the composite resolution referred to above, which I gather has a routine character.

Emergency resolutions - likely defeat of Democracy Now/ILP

As we have already reported, two overlapping pressure groups, Democracy Now and Independent Labour Publications, have put forward emergency resolutions calling respectively for Labour to organise in Northern Ireland and for a review of Labour policy over the coming year. From the other side of the party, Kevin McNamara has been encouraging constituencies and trade unions - he mentioned in particular the Transport and General Workers' Union - to put forward emergency resolutions favourable to his own line.

Kevin was hopeful on Tuesday night that as a natural consequence of publishing its own statement, the National Executive Committee would be opposed to putting any emergency resolutions to a conference vote. Formally, this will be a decision for the Conference Arrangements Committee meeting on the morning of 5 October.

Yesterday's London Independent, in corroboration of Kevin's judgement, predicted that "the leadership" will urge conference to reject the ILP emergency motion.

All the indications suggest that the Unionist/integrationist wing of the Labour Party will suffer a clear-cut defeat in Blackpool.

Shadow Cabinet elections

Kevin mentioned that the Shadow Cabinet elections would take place on 19 October and would involve some thirty candidates for eighteen places. Kevin feels that the results are especially unpredictable this year. As you know, each member of the Parliamentary Party may vote for up to eighteen names, to include at least four women. The likely quota for election is around one hundred votes. Kevin's total last year was eighty-one.

An important factor is that Tony Blair's "modernising" approach is causing disquiet in the party on a number of issues - relations with the TUC, the removal of Whitty from the General Secretaryship, affirmative action for women, Northern Ireland, and perhaps above all the recasting of economic policy, and in particular tax policy, reflected in Tuesday's speech to a Labour seminar. It appears that the Deputy Leader, John Prescott, shares what is now a widespread feeling that a greater element of caution should be introduced into the current reforming exercise - this is reflected in a coded way in an interview with Prescott in today's London Times. Kevin stressed that in a leadership election tomorrow, he would again vote for Tony Blair as the best hope for a Labour Government. He feels, however, that the mood of disquiet in the Party may improve his own chances in the Shadow Cabinet elections.

Kevin feels that there is still a chance, despite much speculation to the contrary, that he will be reappointed as spokesman. Much will depend on his speech to Conference and

the outcome of the Shadow Cabinet elections. He did not mention the possibility, mentioned to me by other MPs who are by and large well-disposed, of his being appointed to a different spokespersonship.

#### Framework document - economic and social objectives

In the course of our discussion, Kevin made a number of points of a policy nature which he evidently hoped I would report in the right quarters.

First, and most strongly, he argued that the framework document should explicitly refer to the commitment of the two Governments to address economic and social deprivation on both sides in the North. He feels that this would be an important signal "to the Shankill and to the working-class Protestants" and would be useful to McNamara himself and to the Labour Party in their effort to demonstrate to loyalists that Labour policy directly addresses their needs. Kevin hinted that this would be a theme of his speech to Conference next week. He pleaded that "if it is not too late", the Irish side should introduce "a line or two in the preamble" of the framework document to refer to the economic and social objectives to be pursued by the two Governments in Northern Ireland.

#### Fair employment/police reform

Kevin wondered - without labouring the point - whether the Irish Government has been pressing forcefully enough on the issues of fair employment and police reform. He is thinking of addressing these subjects in his speech to Conference next week.

#### Articles Two and Three

Kevin urged a cautious approach on amending Article Two. He is focused especially on the automatic entitlement of persons born in Northern Ireland to Irish citizenship.

#### Inter-Parliamentary Body

Kevin believes that in the longer term it would be worth addressing the manner in which MPs on the British side are appointed to membership of the Inter-Parliamentary Body.

#### Conclusion

Although nothing can be taken for granted, Kevin McNamara is optimistic as to the general thrust of future Labour Party policy on Ireland.

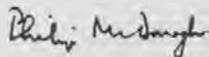
While he is a supporter of Tony Blair and of what he sees as the necessary effort to position Labour for the General Election, he senses that Blair has a battle on his hands in recasting the Party's economic approach and that he will therefore be slow to complicate his relations with the Labour movement by seeking to impose a new Irish policy - even if his

own disposition were to change the policy, which is not necessarily the case.

Yesterday's developments in the NEC - although there could still in theory be an upset before next week - can only be interpreted as a vindication of McNamara's judgement on this issue. A member of McNamara's staff said to me this morning that Blair is bringing in a change of "tone and emphasis", rather than of "content", in Labour Party policy.

Kevin is obviously less certain about his own reappointment as spokesman. He takes comfort from the fact that on Ireland as on other issues, he has acted on a sense of principle - "in politics, trust is everything". Whether reappointed or not, he intends to take a continuing close interest in the development of the peace process.

Yours sincerely



Philip McDonagh  
Counsellor