

FROM: PS/Ian Pearson
08 September 2004

cc: See Distribution List

Chris Stewart - E

MEETING WITH MEPs, 6 SEPTEMBER 2004 – JIM NICHOLSON

Ian Pearson met with Jim Nicholson to discuss European issues. Bill Pauley, Tony Canavan, Mark McLean, Elaine McCrory, you and I supported the Minister.

2. Jim Nicholson anticipated that the two new MEPs, de Brun and Allister, would spend more time in Brussels than their predecessors. He and de Brun were both on the Regional Affairs Committee, which was of particular significance for Northern Ireland. He warned that Northern Ireland was well down the agenda at the moment: all eyes were looking East. A political breakthrough would help immensely. The Minister said state aids would be a big issue for Northern Ireland over the next while.

3. Nicholson said he was to meet Peter Mandelson this week and would try to use the opportunity to remind him about issues affecting Northern Ireland. The previous UK Commissioner had appointed an adviser on Regional Affairs in their Cabinets, which had been very helpful. He might suggest that to Mandelson once he had settled in. The Minister mentioned the proposal to reduce non-domestic electric bills by 10%, which had fallen foul of the Commission. He might seek Mandelson's assistance with the matter.

4. Nicholson noted that the Peace and Reconciliation programme had received funding for two more years. Unionists were missing out, and he was going to press on it unless a fair way could be found to distribute the funds. He accepted that Unionists generally were reluctant to help themselves, but thought that more could be done to actively target working class Protestant communities. He was opposed to Bairbre de Brun's/NICVA's view that the fund should be extended to all of Ireland. He suggested that Councils should be more involved in the distribution of Peace funding. He accepted that LSPs had done a good job in bringing people together, and thought they should be able to



bid for a pool of money rather than have it allocated on a pro rata basis. That would ensure that the best schemes got the money. Councils might also be allowed to bid: it would help to embed the concept of Europe in Northern Ireland.

5. Nicholson thanked the Minister and said it was useful to keep in touch.

Signed

CATHY CLEMENTS

Private Secretary

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cc: PS/Ian Pearson (B&L) – O
Paul Sweeney – E
Tony Canavan – E
Bill Pauley, DFP – E
Alan Whysall – O
Jonathan Margetts – O
Alison Coey – E
William Dukelow – E
Paul Geddis – E
Gareth Nicholson - E



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

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