



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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DPT 15/11

11 September 1987

cc: P. Keegan

cc: PSM  
PSP  
Mr. Nally  
Counsellor P.I.  
DPT 600

Dear Assistant Secretary

Lunch with Rt Hon Neil Kinnock, M.P.

1. Kinnock reiterated his full support for the Agreement and confirmed that the Labour Party's position continues to be based on his address to the Commons (which I praised) during the debate on it in Parliament. He said that while Labour's long-term objectives - like our own - regarding a settlement of the problem differ fundamentally from the Conservatives', and they differ too on issues like plastic bullets, strip-searching and other issues, nevertheless he will insist that in the medium term Labour will give full support to vigorous implementation of the Agreement.
2. He said he wanted to explain privately his choice of Kevin McNamara as Shadow Spokesman on Northern Ireland. He called in Clive Soley and told him that the job could be his, and that in Government the Northern Ireland Secretary of State post was his for the asking, but that he wondered whether at this stage Soley wanted perhaps to break out of his perceived mould - a Home Affairs/Northern Ireland man without broader expertise. He said that Soley agreed with this and expressed strong enthusiasm for the job of Opposition Spokesman on Housing for the foreseeable future. Soley supported Kinnock in the choice of McNamara for Northern Ireland on the basis that he would be very grateful for the opportunity and would in a position of authority balance more carefully his identification with the harder left of the Party and might indeed have a positive influence on them.

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I thanked Kinnock for this and said that we know McNamara well and will work as helpfully as possible with him. I stressed the view that it would be most desirable not to have remarks coming from the Labour front bench which could draw sniping from the new breed of right wing Tories which could perhaps over a period damage the overall bipartisan situation in the House regarding the Agreement, something which would have an adverse effect on the Government Whips, perhaps on Mrs Thatcher, and on Kinnock's own good relationship with her on the Irish question. He agreed very strongly on this and said he would keep an eye on it.

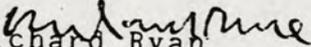
3. He believes that Mrs Thatcher has no real interest in the Irish question, and that her withdrawal of Douglas Hurd from Northern Ireland for domestic political reasons, and his replacement with "that idiot" Tom King goes to prove this. He saw her chief motivation in going for the Agreement as a combination of drawing off international pressure on the problem, and of drawing off criticism of continuing huge expenditure on the military and the security services (he stressed the last point).
4. He believes, he said, that further serious progress on Northern Ireland must await a Labour Government: "Then we will do real business." In the meantime, he sees her preoccupation with the Unionists, her failure to deliver on the Stalker /Sampson report, the Code of Conduct and "the other things" as evidence of her lack of commitment and of personal interest.
5. Molyneaux, Paisley and Robinson have been to see him fairly regularly. Most recently, Molyneaux came to enquire about his intentions regarding McNamara's role, most particularly vis-a-vis the Unionist point of view. He said Molyneaux had - surprisingly - no overt criticism to make of the appointment and indeed asked for advice as to how to best get on with McNamara. Kinnock was contemptuous of the three of them: of Molyneaux for his weakness; of Paisley as "a pure horror"; and of Robinson as someone so full of hatreds - sectarian, political, extending even within his own community - that he reminded him of the typical poor white in Mississippi or Alabama who just hates everybody. He felt that we will have to look to the next emergent generation:

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he mentioned Frank Miller as someone who he thought could develop in a positive way. He said he thought, as I said I did, that David Burnside could very well prove to be a major political force in Unionism in a few years time.

6. I said I wanted him to know about our efforts to get Seamus Mallon onto the Agriculture or the Social Services Select Committee and gave him the background to all this. I said I had discussed it with those concerned in all the parties, including Kevin McNamara, and sought his support for this. He was emphatically positive and said he would raise it personally with John Wakeham. In addition to approving the case on its own merit, he saw it as a way of getting a pro-Labour member elected to one of these important Committees and, by so doing, of simultaneously screwing the Liberals/SDP from whose quota the seat might have to come.
7. We discussed a possible visit to Ireland. he said he would very much like if arrangements could be made for him to come for a meeting with the Taoiseach and, separately, with the leader of the Labour Party. He would prefer not, he said, to include the Fine Gael leader, whom he has not met, on this visit. He asked whether I could take soundings on this idea and come back to him about it. He would purpose to bring his wife Glenys, his political adviser Charles Clarke and Hilary Coffman from his press office. He would like something before the end of the year if diaries on both sides permitted. The ideal framework for him would be meetings on a Thursday evening and during Friday.
8. He suggested also that some of his best people, such as Bryan Gould, John Smith and so on, should be kept in regular contact, not just through contact with the Embassy which he knows about, but additionally at political level in Dublin in their areas of responsibility. I said I would pass this on too.
9. We agreed to meet again at a private dinner to be arranged.

Yours sincerely

  
Richard Ryan  
Chargé d'Affaires a.i.