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SECRET

Mr Gallagher

*Mr McCarthy
mx
11.4.88
to [unclear]*

*cc P.S. T...
P.S. H
P.S. H. Nally
Councillor H.
[unclear]*

*Letter to [unclear]
on 25/3/87*

SDLP MEETING WITH KING

John Hume briefed me in Derry last night. The SDLP delegation was Hume, Mallon, McGrady, Currie, Farren and Hendron. King had no other Minister present; there were three officials, Blelloch, Bloomfield and Burns. The meeting lasted two hours. Hume made a point for the cameras of arriving in McGrady's car. He said last weekend's row had been patched up.

ATMOSPHERE

Contrary to the up-beat reports last evening and in today's media, Hume described the meeting as "very bad" and the SDLP delegation as "shell-shocked" - so much so that they opted out of a briefing on today's education document arranged with Mawhinney for after the meeting. Hume said his side felt King was "threatening" and trying to "bounce" them into support for devolution. He did not accept or appear to understand the SDLP strategy proposed to him. As the meeting drew to an end, Currie began to ask a question but was cut short by King who stood up, said "that's it" and rapidly left the room. Hume drew some encouragement from the presence of the officials (especially Bloomfield) whom he felt had taken his position on board.

MAIN POINTS

King asked for the SDLP's proposals on devolution. He did not go into detail on the Unionist proposals already given to him. He referred repeatedly to Article 4 of the Agreement and put it to the SDLP that they would be responsible for the breakdown of the Agreement if they did not support devolution.

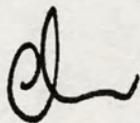
*to the
public
dimension*

Hume responded that the SDLP was "not opposed to devolution". The arrangements for devolution could not be the committee system which he had heard Unionists had put forward. The arrangements would have to be such as to (i) breakdown barriers and (ii) make for permanent stability. For these reasons the Unionists should come to an understanding with Dublin (he referred here to Molyneaux's weekend speech). That understanding in turn could be validated by referenda held North and South on the same day. King should understand the importance of that offer. It was the best guarantee that Unionists could have. The SDLP had been in a devolved government before. They knew that a new devolved government would have to be strong enough to face the pressures. Would an Executive (along Sunningdale lines) have survived the last two months?

King asked if a Unionist agreement with Dublin would replace the existing Agreement. Hume said it would transcend the Agreement. It would be far more important in historical terms.

OTHER MATTERS

The SDLP said they wanted to talk also about Stalker/Sampson, prisons and appointments to public bodies. King declined, indicating he wanted to concentrate on the political issue.



Declan O'Donovan
30 March, 1988.