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Mr Sean O hUiginn
Second Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs
Dublin

Dear Secretary

A Conversation with John Hume

I spoke with John Hume at the House of Commons this afternoon.

Hume was deeply satisfied at the Taoiseach's statement at the Council of Europe and asked for extra copies to give to colleagues.

He feels that the stand he has taken on elections is having an effect. He has learned indirectly that Major is looking for a meeting and expects this to happen on Tuesday, the first day when Mallon will also be available in London.

Hume also felt that the British Government was giving ground at today's Northern Ireland Questions. Of particular significance was Andrew Hunter's question asking the Secretary of State to confirm that the remit of "an elective process" would have to be agreed among the parties. Hume sees this as giving the SDLP some leverage.

Hume also noted with satisfaction the questions put by Mo Mowlam and her deputy Tony Worthington suggesting that elections can only go ahead on the basis of widespread agreement among the parties, a commitment to negotiations and safeguards for minorities. While Mayhew's answers were evasive, the questions indicate some development of Labour policy. (Comment: Hume did not mention what I have learned from other sources, that he walked out of his meeting this

ing with Blair and Mowlam - although Mallon stayed
(ind.)

briefly discussed with Hume the possible significance of
Hunter's question. If the parties are to agree on a remit,
why should they not agree within twin-track on other things,
and why should not these agreements be ratified at a formal
meeting involving all parties which would in effect be the
launch of an all party conference or process?

Hume was saying to journalists, by the way, that if elections
are held on the present plan the SDLP would do as it did in
the 1980's.

Helen Blake has reported on Northern Ireland Questions. As a
final point about this afternoon, I would draw attention to
John Taylor's question which called for an early meeting
between the two governments, with a view to providing
reassurances on North South cooperation.

Yours sincerely,

Philip McDonagh

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