

CONFIDENTIAL

Phone call from John Hume

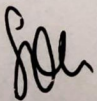
3 April, 1996

cc PST 41
PSS
Mr T Salter
✓ Mr S Saul
John
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1. I had a phone call from Mr. John Hume this morning. He was on his way to London for a joint meeting with the other Northern Ireland MEPs and the Prime Minister on the beef issue.
2. His main purpose in calling was to ask the Tánaiste to plead with the British Government to rethink the election idea. The list of fifteen parties which had been published (Natural Law Party, etc.) was farcical. There was near agreement, according to Hume, among the parties that this was all going wrong. The British should draw back now and bring the parties around the table without elections.
3. I said we were making clear to the British at every level our concern that the whole elective process could become a quagmire. However, I thought they would feel "on the hook", given the commitments they had made. The only possibility I saw was for a common approach to them by the parties. Failing that, they would persist with their plan, and the only realistic objective would be to try and make sure that the elections were shaped in the right way. I suggested to Hume that he should take up this issue in the margins of his contact with the other MEPs today. If he got a sense of openness to his proposal from the two unionist parties, we would then be in a much stronger position vis-a-vis the British.
4. Hume said he would do this. He thought it might be possible to buy off the unionists with a forum, but which would not have to be elected. I said we

would have no problem with any such scenario. Our only doubt was whether it was realistic to expect the British to change tack at this late stage.

5. Hume mentioned that the British had indicated that they had strongly considered his referendum proposal and that the obstacle seemed to be at the Dublin end. I said we also remained open, but we had some worries how the referendum campaign might develop if one were launched in present circumstances.
6. I referred in very guarded terms to his last contact with the Taoiseach, saying that the Taoiseach felt it had been a valuable meeting and found the draft encouraging. I asked Hume how he thought the Taoiseach should take matters forward.
7. Hume said that he had had an "in-depth chat" with Adams yesterday and would see him again on Easter Sunday. He hoped at that point to have a more definite text. He said that the follow-up should be through himself. He felt encouraged that the Republican movement wanted "off the hook" and he thought prospects were encouraging.



Sean Ó hUiginn

3 April 1996