



# An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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and w: 9-1 to

29 April 1998

UE 30/4

Copy

Mr. Dermot Gallagher  
Second Secretary  
Anglo-Irish Division  
Department of Foreign Affairs

Taoiseach  
[Signature]  
30-4-98

Dear Secretary,

**Conversation with Kevin McNamara MP**

Kevin McNamara telephoned me this morning.

**The Agreement**

McNamara said that the central political reality in the aftermath of the Agreement is that the yes vote in Northern Ireland must surpass 72%. McNamara calculates in broad terms that 44% of the population are Nationalists; half of the Unionist population equals 28%. If the yes vote is less than the total of these two figures, i.e., 72%, it can be assumed that there is no secure Unionist backing for the Agreement.

I suggested that for a number of reasons, including Republican disaffection, 44% may overstate the Nationalist vote.

McNamara conceded that the Nationalist vote on 22 May might be as little as 39% of the electorate as a whole. On the other hand, the figure mentioned above for Unionists voting yes to the Agreement, namely 28% of the electorate, would include many Alliance voters. McNamara insisted therefore that Trimble can only feel secure on an overall yes vote of at least 72%. On a yes vote of just over 50%, the Agreement would be "dead in the water". On a yes vote of 60-70%, the parties

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would struggle on through the Assembly elections but with every prospect of a "repetition in slow motion" of the collapse of Sunningdale.

### Possible human rights prize for the CAJ

The Council of Ministers (Deputies) of the Council of Europe is to decide in the near future, possibly in June, on the allocation of a human rights prize. The human rights committee on which McNamara sits has submitted a shortlist of three names: the CAJ, a Turkish organisation, and an individual candidate (an Italian woman whom McNamara did not name). McNamara has been lobbying for the CAJ and requested Government support. The Agreement makes this the most opportune moment to make an award to the CAJ, which has credibility on both sides of the community in Northern Ireland. McNamara fears that tensions between British parliamentarians and the British Permanent Representative on a separate issue (to do with choosing among three British candidates for a position on the Court of Human Rights) may make it difficult to lobby the British government successfully on behalf of the CAJ.

McNamara remarked in passing on the constructive line taken by John Taylor within the Council of Europe on the recent Agreement.

### British-Irish Interparliamentary Body

As I have discussed with Colm O'Flonn, McNamara expressed reservations on a private basis about the timing of the next meeting of the British-Irish Interparliamentary Body. He said that there are "rumblings" on the British side to do with the impact that any altercation in Dublin, prompted for example by a right-wing Conservative member, could have on the referendum campaign in the North. As I have mentioned to Colm, the leader of the Conservative delegation Michael Mates was mentioned as sharing such concerns. Reference was also made in this general connection to Dr. Mowlam's PPS Helen Jackson.

Yours sincerely,

*Philip McDonagh*

Philip McDonagh  
Counsellor