



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

Reference Code:	2020/17/59
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
Accession Conditions:	Open
Copyright:	National Archives, Ireland. May only be reproduced with the written permission of the Director of the National Archives.

12/10
12.10.90
p2
BASAID NA HEIREANN, LONDAIN



IRISH EMBASSY, LONDON

12/10
12.10.90
p2
SEEN OF

17, GROSVENOR PLACE,
SW1X 7HR
Telephone: 01-235 2171
TELEX: 916104

Confidential

8 October 1990 .

Mr Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Department of Foreign Affairs

Dear Assistant Secretary

A conversation with Tony Blair MP

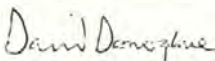
Blair, who is shadow spokesman for employment, is one of the most talented members of the Shadow Cabinet. He is close to Kinnock and, along with Gordon Brown, is tipped as a possible future leader of the party.

The following points arose in a brief conversation which I had with Blair in Blackpool last week:

- Blair was quite unhappy with the decision taken on PR (the effect of which is to commit Labour to study its possible introduction at Westminster). He fears that this decision will give all the wrong signals at a time when Labour is riding high in the polls and the prospect of a Labour Government on its own next time round is becoming increasingly plausible to the electorate. Coming so far in advance of the election, it will be interpreted as a sign of insecurity on Labour's part about the outcome of the election. If Labour is to opt for PR, it would be tactically much wiser to delay committing itself in this direction until after the next election.
- Blair is personally not convinced by the arguments in favour of PR. In particular, he rejects the notion that the absence of PR has been responsible for keeping Margaret Thatcher in office for a decade - "our own loonie Left kept us out in 1983". He also indicated that there is no difference whatsoever between Roy Hattersley and Neil Kinnock on this issue. At a NEC meeting in Blackpool last Sunday, Kinnock warned in very strong terms of the risks attached to PR. The Shadow Cabinet has a united position on this subject.

- Blair's private view is that Labour will not, in fact, win the next election. "Looking at the arithmetic, we have a fighting chance - but no more". A narrow defeat is the more likely outcome. He would hope and expect, however, that Labour would win the following election.
- Blair takes a general interest in Irish affairs and, in the course of our conversation, he indicated very strong support for the objective of Irish unity by consent. "We cannot stay there forever". It is natural and logical to try to prepare the ground for Irish reunification. The British Government, Blair commented, must eventually take an initiative in that direction.
- Blair anticipated that Kevin McNamara would be the Secretary of State in a first Kinnock Government. He went on to suggest, however, that, "if we decide to take a political initiative about Northern Ireland, he would not be our man". Any such initiative, however, would not be taken during Kinnock's first administration (when Labour's majority would probably be wafer-thin) but would be left over to his second term.

Yours sincerely



David Donoghue
Press and Information Officer