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Cross Border Studies

MEDIA WATCH

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Martin McGuinness urges reunification border poll in event of vote to leave EU

A border poll on the reunification of Ireland should be held if Britain votes to leave the EU, Martin McGuinness said.

The Sinn Fein leader predicted any exit would be against the democratic wishes of the Irish people.

The Democratic Unionists are the only large party in Northern Ireland to campaign for Brexit in the June referendum.

Mr McGuinness said: "Such a negative development would represent a political and economic game changer."

Sinn Fein, the Ulster Unionists and the nationalist SDLP are campaigning to stay in the EU.

Mr McGuinness added: "Ireland's place north and south is in Europe and leading change in Europe.

"If Britain votes to leave the European Union then that could have huge implications for the entire island of Ireland and, given all the predictions, would run counter to the democratic wishes of the Irish people.

"If there is a vote in Britain to leave the EU there is a democratic imperative to provide Irish citizens with the right to vote in a border poll to end partition and retain a role in the EU."

He said the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which ended decades of the Troubles provided for a border poll to be conducted, with Britain bound to legislate for any change arising.

"I have proposed to (the UK's Northern Ireland Secretary) Theresa Villiers that, given the enormous significance of these issues, the British government now give a firm commitment to an immediate border poll in the event Britain votes to leave the European Union."

A Northern Ireland Office statement said: "The (UK) Government set out its position on a border poll in its manifesto at the last election which said: 'In our view all tests of opinion show that in Northern Ireland today a substantial majority continues to support the Union.

"We therefore feel that the circumstances requiring a border poll are not currently satisfied and that such an exercise would be costly, divisive and a distraction."

Ms Villiers is one of a number of Tory UK Cabinet members to campaign for Brexit and has said the safer option is to leave.

Source: Belfast Telegraph

7 March 2016

Nimbus boss Gareth McAlister: Brexit's impact on IT security 'could drive business out of NI'

The boss of a Northern Ireland technology company has revealed he has concerns over cyber-security in the event of a Brexit.

Gareth McAlister, managing director of Nimbus, also warned that big firms could look elsewhere to create new jobs.

The Nimbus chief claimed that closing the single market could lead to a severe shortage of talent in the technology sector.

And he warned that data protection legislation, which stems from EU law, would have to be redrawn from scratch if the UK votes to leave the EU.

"I think, in terms of data protection, the UK is going to have to put some sort of data protection in place," Mr McAlister said. "If they break away, they will have to develop their own (legislation), or replicate it.

"If it doesn't follow suit and take on board the EU laws, it will have to come up with its own. But for the time being, data protection in the UK will not be as robust. It will be a grey area. It may scare people, especially the big multi-nationals.

Nimbus provides a range of IT services, including assistance and data systems for a plethora of global companies.

The business, which has offices in Belfast and Dublin, doubled its turnover year-on-year in its last results, and now employs 15 staff.

Mr McAlister said the growth was down to winning **cross-border** and UK contracts. Nimbus counts a number of well-known businesses as clients, including Titanic Belfast.

Last month it landed a two-year deal to deliver IT systems for customer service, back office administration and IT facilities at the visitor attraction, as well as the Nomadic and Titanic Exhibition Centre.

But despite the good news for his company, Mr McAlister said he feared a Brexit would lead to a shortage of workers.

"Northern Ireland is already crying out for good, qualified staff," he added. "The UK and Northern Ireland are trying to compete globally on tech, and there is a huge shortage of talent currently. If a Brexit were to happen, it would be a big problem.

"The engineers on the UK tech side are being paid £50,000 to £60,000, and that's across Europe. The likes of US companies are buying into Europe, into the UK, because they know the talent is there. If it isn't there after a Brexit, where does that leave the UK?"

And speaking about his own business, he claimed leaving the EU would be bad news down the line. "We are not trading outside the UK and Ireland at the moment, maybe in the next couple of years," Mr McAlister said.

"If we were to win a contract - for example one customer who has sites all over the world, but we look after their Belfast offer - if they asked us to maintain other sites, I would worry how reluctant they would be to host their data if we were outside the EU."

Last month a range of industry experts, including the former managing director of Allstate in Northern Ireland, Bro McFerran, warned some of the world's biggest companies could leave the region in the event of a Brexit.

There are serious concerns that major international companies - which have been attracted here by millions of pounds in EU funding - could be poached by the Republic if the public votes to leave in the forthcoming vote.

Bro McFerran said there was "very definitely" a risk of firms withdrawing from Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Source: Belfast Telegraph

16 March 2016

Johnson is trying to drown out Irish voices on Brexit - Mandelson

FORMER Northern Ireland Secretary Peter Mandelson has claimed that campaigners in favour of a British exit from the European Union are trying to drown out debate.

The ex-Labour Party minister has insisted that the Irish Government should be involved in the discussion ahead of the referendum later this year.

Mr Mandelson said it would be "odd" if people like Taoiseach Enda Kenny were not making their view known publicly, and criticised the Mayor of London Boris Johnson for trying to block differing opinions.

"People don't want other points to be heard, whether it's coming from the Taoiseach of Ireland, President Obama or a business person large or small," he said. At an event organised by the British Irish Chamber of Commerce in London yesterday, Mr Mandelson warned that a Brexit would result in "a hard Irish border between **North and south**".

He said that could lead to "renewed sectarianism".

Speaking afterwards to the Irish Independent, he said: "Britain and Ireland have a close relationship. We are joint members of the European Union. We share an island of Ireland and we are both guarantors of the Northern Ireland peace process."

He said that was reason enough for Irish voices to be heard over the coming months.

"It would be odd not to hear from the Irish Government on something that affects them."

Mr Mandelson, who was Northern Secretary between 1999 and 2001, said: "Economic opportunities underpin the peaceful relations and good politics in Northern Ireland.

"If we were to throw a spanner in the economic works, it would have a huge impact on trade and that would have a huge impact on Northern Ireland."

He added: "Some argue that separation is a good thing. The more separate identities, and separate lives and the further apart we are, the better. That sort of attitude feeds sectarianism."

He declined to criticise British Prime Minister David Cameron for allowing a referendum, saying: "It doesn't matter how we got here."

However, he added that there is "a right and an obligation" for people in his position to speak out about the risk of leaving the union.

"Boris Johnson and the other Brexiters would dearly love to drown us out," he said.

Asked why Britain has such a dim view of the EU compared with Ireland, he replied: "Because for the last 20 years we've been told by the big circulation newspapers that Europe is bad and it's going to hell in handcart and taking us with it."

Source: Irish Independent