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Confidential

9 March 1990

Mr. Dermot Gallagher
Assistant Secretary
Anglo-Irish Division

Dear Assistant Secretary

Lunch with Frank Millar

The following points of interest arose over lunch with Frank Millar this week:

McGimpsey decision

- Millar told me that Ken Maginnis and the McGimpsey brothers are privately "delighted" with the Supreme Court decision on their appeal. They regard it as confirmation of what Unionists have always asserted about Articles 2 and 3 of the Irish Constitution, i.e., that the claim expressed in these Articles is an imperative rather than a mere aspiration and that it must, therefore, be actively pursued. Maginnis and the McGimpseys never accepted the interpretation that it was a mere aspiration and feel, therefore, that the Supreme Court's decision this week vindicates their position; vindicates the Unionists' scepticism about Article 1 of the Agreement; and strengthens their hand in seeking the removal, or at least modification, of Articles 2 and 3.
- Maginnis will be seeking a meeting with the Taoiseach in the next fortnight with a view to discussing the implications of the decision and pressing for removal or amendment of the Articles. He will be

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doing so, Millar told me, with the personal approval of Molyneaux. He may even threaten that, if no action is taken on the Articles, Unionists will not take part in talks in NI.

- I recalled the readiness of the Taoiseach, indicated on many occasions, to meet Unionists for talks without preconditions or restrictions and to hear their concerns at first hand. Speaking personally, however, I suggested that the Unionists would not help their cause by adding yet another obstacle to dialogue, which could only raise doubts about the sincerity of their commitment to making political progress.

Harold McCusker and the Upper Bann bye-election

- Millar spoke at some length of Harold McCusker, to whom he had been very close. He said that the family had greatly appreciated Dermot Gallagher's presence at the funeral.
- As regards the succession, McCusker's widow took Millar aside on the night before the funeral and told him that it had been Harold's wish, "more or less on his death-bed", that Millar should replace him. Millar was moved by this but felt that Jenny McCusker herself should stand for the seat. If she had reservations, she could hold the seat simply until the next election and then review her position. Her candidature made sense to Millar on many grounds. They have discussed the matter in some detail since then and, while Mrs McCusker has yet to make her decision, Millar expects that she will in fact stand.
- If she goes forward, she will certainly win. Millar believes that, if he himself were to go forward, he would also win. He was dismissive, however, of all other possible OUP candidates, in particular David Trimble (for whom he has a very low regard).
- He has mixed feelings about his own decision not to seek the seat. On the one hand, Upper Bann would offer him the chance of elective office, towards which his political career has always been directed. "In a sense, I've been waiting for this opportunity for years". On the other hand, he left NI politics three years ago not just because of the shelving of the Task Force report (to which he could have turned a blind eye, as Robinson and McCusker did) but also, and more importantly, because he had been feeling increasingly uncomfortable with his OUP colleagues. As long as he was an official of the OUP, his every movement was watched and great restrictions were placed on the contacts he could make. Now that these restraints are gone and that he can talk to anyone, he is much happier. The prospect of subjecting himself once again to party discipline (by becoming a Westminster MP) was not attractive.

- A further consideration was his aversion to Westminster as such. Professing a fundamental dislike for the British, he said that NI's destiny must be decided by NI people in Northern Ireland. He would therefore be far more interested in running for a future Assembly seat than in seeking election to Westminster.

Seamus Mallon

- In the course of our discussion, Millar recalled Seamus Mallon's Commons speech at the end of November. He revealed considerable admiration for Mallon and said that, although Mallon remains a hate-figure for most of his OUP colleagues, he has always found him to be "the most impressive, the most approachable and the most human" of all the SDLP politicians.

Peter Robinson

- Millar described Robinson as a political associate rather than a personal friend. They have, in fact, very little in common with each other. Robinson comes from "a completely different culture" and Millar regarded him as his political rival for a long time. He has certain basic insecurities, as the Clontibret escapade showed. His distinctly unheroic demeanour following Clontibret lost him many friends.
- A charitable view, however, would be that Robinson considered that the Clontibret stunt was necessary in order to establish his hard-line credentials prior to taking Unionism down a more moderate path. What he wants desperately, Millar commented, is power. He knows that he can achieve this only via devolution. The more flexible approach he has demonstrated over the past year or so is dictated by pragmatism, not principle. His plan is to do all possible to bring about a devolved government in which he can play a leading role. Millar cautioned against any view that Robinson is a moderate or a liberal - "he remains a radical".
- Robinson has "no relationship with Paisley to speak of". Knowing that the next DUP leader is likely to be McCrea or Dodds, he will find an appropriate moment to leave the DUP. The OUP, Millar believes, will certainly find a place for him - though not as leader (or, at least, not as leader for some considerable time).

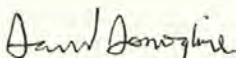
The Irish Times

- Millar is employed by the Irish Times to do a weekly column and also to provide advice on matters relating to NI. Last weekend, for example, he was asked for his view of the story by Fergus Pyle (in Saturday's edition) which claimed that a British plan for an "initiative" to be put to the NI party leaders had provoked

"consternation" on the Irish side. He dismissed this story as very likely to be inaccurate. He has a very low opinion of Pyle and is glad that the latter has now been moved to another job.

- He is continuing his series of interviews for the Irish Times. He has done seven so far and has plans for another five or six. He intends to publish them all as a book in due course. He mentioned that he has requested an interview with the Minister. He has also sought one with Peter Brooke and has obtained the latter's agreement in principle. Other intended subjects include Kevin McNamara and Seamus Mallon (who declined when Millar approached him last year). He is still toying with the idea of interviewing Gerry Adams; he indicated, however, that the Irish Times is unhappy with the idea. Paisley, though angered by Millar's approach to Robinson in the first instance, has agreed to do the last interview in the series.

Yours sincerely



David Donoghue
Press and Information Officer