



An Chartlann Náisiúnta National Archives

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A/Sec Gallagher

When I called on Paddy Devlin this week I found that he had invited Official Unionist, Chris McGimpsey, to sit in on the conversation. [Devlin and McGimpsey work closely together on the "Peace Train Committee".] While McGimpsey was friendly and appeared anxious to have regular contact with Dublin, I found him somewhat inhibited and cautious on this occasion. In conversation the following points emerged:

Talks:

While he was emphatic that all OUP M.P.'s and party officers are enthusiastic about the talks, he appeared to have no clear idea of what the process might yield. He betrayed a certain nervousness - "it will two and a half to one in these talks", by which he meant that it will be the British Government + the Irish Government + the SDLP against the Unionists.

He saw the approach of the Irish Government as the key and toyed with the idea that the Government's interests may yet diverge from those of the SDLP. He fully expects a maximalist agenda from the SDLP - but wondered if that would be the Government's agenda. He confessed that Unionists simply did not know and would never know until they had developed their own direct relationship with the Taoiseach and Government in Dublin. [In that context, he regretted that he and Ken Maginnis had not availed of the opportunity to meet the Taoiseach in the aftermath of their Supreme Court case. They had hesitated too long which had allowed the pressure on Maginnis to build up.]

It was clear from his comments that he sees an internal accommodation with nationalists as achievable; with the real problems for Unionists arising in relation to the shape or

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form of any expression of an institutionalised role for the Dublin Government in the affairs of the North.

He expects an escalation in Provo activity during the talks. While he did not comment in any detail on security issues, he did say that the major failing on the Unionist side in relation to Sunningdale was to believe that the SDLP could "deliver" the Provos. [The implication was clear that any agreement emerging from this process would not, of itself, be sufficient to deliver peace and that other measures would be required. I received the same message, though expressed in more explicit terms, from a number of Protestant Church people I met in Belfast this week who openly highlighted selective internment north and south as a "bottom-line" for selling any new agreement to grass-roots Unionists.]

West Belfast:

McGimpsey is active in the Shankill area of West Belfast. He and Devlin appeared to be working on developing a strategy to unseat Gerry Adams from his Westminster seat based on two main elements:

- A publicity campaign aimed at the people of West Belfast which, while avoiding support for any party, would focus on the incompatibility of violence and democratic politics.
- Teasing out the possibility of encouraging sufficient tactical voting by the roughly 8,000 Protestant voters on the Shankill to ensure the defeat of Adams. (The present margin between Adams and Joe Hendron is quite tight - roughly 2,200 votes.) While Devlin was enthusiastic about the idea and had already raised it with Hume, McGimpsey was noticeably more hesitant at the prospect of seeing Hendron elected - something which he feared might be interpreted as a victory for the Anglo-Irish Agreement.

T:-
Brendan McMahon
Anglo-Irish Division
11 April 1991.