



**An Chartlann Náisiúnta**  
**National Archives**

**Reference Code:** 2021/94/37

**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.

9 June 1992

*W. H. Carr  
W. H. Carr  
17.6.92 1616*  
SECURE FAX

~~SS~~  
usual circ.

*SDP  
10/6*

To HQ

From London

For A/Sec O hUiginn

From Brendan McMahon

(Copy to Joint Secretary) *Not Copied*

Conversation with Frank Miller, Irish Times.

I had lunch today with Millar in the course of which he made a number of points which may be of interest.

- He remains pessimistic about the likelihood of the talks proceeding to the Second Strand. Earlier in the week he had heard that the working-group had looked like they just might be able to square the circle between the SDLP and unionist proposals. However, the most recent indications he had received from Belfast are that some of the negotiators may have moved ahead of their party leaders. He had already heard a rumour that Hume had been forced to rein-in the SDLP team and that there had been a row between Hume and Durkan.
- He felt that some unionists would like to test the process by moving to Strand Two. He commented that the Strand Two talks would be a useful test, from a unionist perspective, of the amount of common ground which actually exists between the two Governments. His own estimate is that there would be less common ground than many unionists might suspect. Even if this were not the case, unionists should in any event move to Strand Two and find out just how much, or how little, the British Government might be prepared to concede to the nationalist agenda.
- However, he does not anticipate that the unionists will in the end have the necessary boldness for such a move. With the SDLP formula still on the table; with Dublin and the SDLP showing a united front; and with a British Government whose long-term intentions remain obscure to many unionists; the dangers inherent in moving to Strand Two will, in Millar's view, prove too much of a risk for Molyneux and / or Paisley.
- The question will then arise as to how Mayhew will arrive at his decision on moving to Strand Two. His own feeling is that Mayhew will not force the pace by moving to Strand Two in the face of unionist opposition. Such a

strategy would force the unionists to carry the can for a failure of the talks. With a majority of only 21 in the House of Commons, he sees little incentive for the Tory Government to be seen to dump on the unionists in this way.

- In the aftermath of the talks initiative, unionist strategy at Westminster will be to resume the Molyneux agenda - specifically the establishment of a Northern Ireland Select Committee. He expects this to be coupled with greater unionist involvement in the wider debate on the future of the Union - notably the question of Scotland. He felt that the Select Committee is probably achievable in the current climate, with a Conservative Government which has a number of Junior Ministers of avowedly unionist views; and a new in-take of Tory M.P.'s many of whom are of strong Thatcherite and unionist sentiment. In any event he doubted whether the British Government would resist a Select Committee and might be tempted to see it as representing a new level of engagement by unionists with the British Government. From Dublin's point of view, he saw little reason for serious concern at the advent of a Select Committee. He speculated that we might well share the British Government's perspective, at least to the extent of being tempted to view it as representing a growing acquiescence by unionists to the Hillsborough system.

- In the end he foresees a dawning realisation among unionists that the Anglo-Irish Agreement may in fact represent the best option available - and certainly preferable to any alternative which might be on offer in negotiations aimed at finding a replacement.

- Millar continues to be interested in the possibilities offered by Article 4 of the Agreement. He speculated at some length as to whether the British Government might in the end seek to activate this article (either explicitly or, more likely, implicitly) through a prescriptive approach to devolution. He felt that such a strategy, if cleverly formulated, might prove difficult for both Dublin and the SDLP to resist.