



An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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PSS
Mr. F. Murray
See T. Gallen
Counsellor #1
Feb
2/2

Note

I spoke to Mr. Reg Empey this morning. He said he had spoken to Molyneaux and had been given authority to act as a channel of communication with us.

I asked him for his assessment of the recent inter-unionist skirmishing and whether we had to roll up the map until after May. He disagreed emphatically on this last point. There would not be a "good" time for some time ahead (European elections next year). He felt Paisley had really intended to launch this attack about Easter, but had got carried away in a constituency context. (Ian Junior at the same meeting had spoken of the DUP needing to "claw their way back" to the top). To some extent the UUP felt they had already drawn the DUP venom on the issue and were not over-perturbed.

I sounded him out about a meeting between the Tánaiste and Mr. Molyneaux. He said Mr. Molyneaux's distinct preference was for low-key initial contacts which could "exchange shopping lists". A meeting with the Tánaiste was by no means ruled out, but it had to be prepared so as to ensure a positive outcome or, at the very least, avoid failure.

I said the Tánaiste was at present actively considering his options and might like a first-hand contact with the UUP, perhaps privately and informally and not necessarily at leadership level, essentially for his own information. Mr. Empey said this was not something he could give an instant response to, but he did not rule it out. I made it clear that I was merely making enquiries personally, without the Tánaiste's authority, simply to be able to brief him on the possibilities open to him.

As to how we should approach matters generally, Mr. Empey repeated that if the Tánaiste could give a helpful public signal they would consider whether they could respond positively. They would be happy to make suggestions as to what might be said (although he accepted fully the Tánaiste would have to take account of many other factors in his positions). Mr. Molyneaux's preference remained for careful low-key preparation of any bilateral to avoid risk of failure. Mr. Empey added that he felt momentum should be built up to avoid a political vacuum.

SOH

Seán O hUiginn
2 February, 1993