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Mr. A. Murray
Cannellon AT

Lunch with Senator Gordon Wilson

SEEN BY
[Circular stamp]

JH 5/7/93

1. I had lunch on the 1st of July with Senator Gordon Wilson at his request.
2. He seemed anxious to take soundings about how he should develop his future role in the Seanad. He said he had consulted former Senator John Robb before his appointment. Robb had advised him to stay clear of groupings and to avoid presenting himself as the representative of any particular political tendency. Senator Wilson said that the Taoiseach had given him the most categorical assurances that there were no "strings" attached to his appointment. Senator Wilson nevertheless seemed concerned that if he failed to take part in the routine business of the Seanad that he might in some way be remiss. He seemed particularly concerned that, because of a trip to the United States, he had to miss the Seanad debate on the Opsahl Commission which he had himself requested.
3. I told Senator Wilson that I was certain he could rely fully on the assurances about his freedom and independence which he had been given by the Taoiseach. The Seanad appointment was intended as a platform where he could give personal witness and make his influence for good felt as and when he himself best saw fit. No one would expect him to become involved in issues or areas which he did not find of direct personal interest to him.
4. He spoke a little about his former contacts with representatives of the IRA. He was clearly still disappointed that his overtures had not met with a more positive response. He indicated that he was still contemplating a further approach to Sinn Fein, as such, to persuade them of the futility of violence and the need to take a different path. His view was that political talks

could not succeed without this element. At the same time there would need to be an interval of a year or two after they had abandoned violence before they could be acceptable at the table.

5. While acknowledging his freedom to make whatever contacts as he thought fit, I expressed my personal doubts that such an approach to Sinn Fein would bear fruit. I felt Sinn Fein was likely to be motivated by very "hard-nosed" considerations that they were as likely to be impervious to purely moral appeals as he had found the IRA representatives to be.
6. We had some general discussion on the situation in Northern Ireland. Senator Wilson emphasised the strength of Unionist opposition to Irish unity and stressed that people who held such views should not be seen as extremists or fanatics. At the same time he spoke of the depth of mistrust between Catholics and Protestants in certain areas. He instanced a recent discussion he had with a very respectable Protestant in Fermanagh. He had asked the man concerned if there were any Catholics that he trusted. The categorical reply was that "We are good neighbours. I employ Catholics but there is not one I would trust. I believe every one would knife me in the back."
7. Senator Wilson did not conceal a strong resentment at the attitude of the DUP. He himself had been violently denounced by Paisley after he had attended a remembrance mass at a local Catholic church just after the Enniskillen massacre. He had some time subsequently met Paisley in a departure lounge in London airport, but Paisley had cut him dead, which, a little surprisingly, seems to have offended him deeply.

8. I assured Senator Wilson of the Tanaiste's goodwill and that if the Department could be of service to him in any way he should feel free to call upon it.



Sean O hUiginn

1 July, 1993.