

An Chartlann Náisiúnta
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Mr Wally Kirwan,
Department of An Taoiseach,
Dublin 2.

26 May 2000

Dear Wally,

Just a brief note to let you know how our meeting with Gary McMichael went. Myself and Pat Hynes met him in the White Gables Hotel. Hillsborough at around 9.10 pm, we spoke until around 10:40 pm. I am writing these notes at about 3.00 am (Friday) – so please excuse typos. During the conversation Gary made the following points:

Meeting with An Taoiseach

Gary is not yet sure if they will be taking up the offer of a meeting on Tuesday next. Though when, towards the end of our discussion, I again asked him about the Tuesday meeting, he said that he was not saying they wouldn't attend.

The UDP had an officer board meeting a few nights ago and were unhappy that they had not yet met with An Taoiseach. The board had been of the opinion that the time for the meeting had passed. Gary felt that he might be wise to postpone the meeting for a week or so and convince his board of the wisdom of it. He is travelling to Scotland for a wedding today (Friday) and will return on Sunday night.

"Process is Flawed"

One of the main points he wishes to raise with An Taoiseach is the UDP's belief that "the process is flawed" by its non-inclusivity. He believes that an opportunity was missed at Hillsborough to strap the loyalist paramilitaries into the process. He feels that if he had been better informed by the two Premiers as to what was planned, then he might have been able to prepare the ground for a positive response by the UDA/UFF to the IRA statement. He feels that his political value has been somewhat diminished by the events surrounding Hillsborough – he had gone back to his people saying that there was no deal imminent only then to discover a deal 12 hours later.

Weapons Inspections

Regarding the IRA propsals for weapon inspections Gary said that the UDA and UFF would not be engaging in a similar process. They would not engage in a measure which they felt was being proscribed in part by the IRA. They would not be bounced into actions or processes in whose deliberations they had not been engaged. They believed that de Chastelain was the best and only route. They would not follow the IRA's example of arms inspections (viz UFF statement), though he acknowledged that if the weapons inspectors could confirm that the arms caches were secure that it might help loyalists to believe that the IRA were serious. He later said that if the UUP were to go back into the Executive and the IRA reappointed their representative to the de Chastelain Commission he felt sure that the UDA would appoint their representative.

He also expressed annoyance that the British Government had not arranged for a proper meeting between himself and Cyril Ramaphosa. He said that he had spoken with Mr

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Ramaphosa by phone, had expressed these same concerns to him and that Mr Ramaphosa had agreed that they should have been more involved.

He brought a copy of the UFF statement and said that he was disappointed that media reaction had focussed so much on the negative comments and failed to recognise the positive commitments it contained. He again repeated that he felt an opportunity to bring the loyalists more closely into the process had been missed.

UDA being "squeezed out of the process
He emphasised that there were some in loyalism who felt that the agreement had not yet delivered anything. Indeed he said that many in the UDA felt that they were being "squeezed out of the process". This view had been exacerbated by the belief that the UDP had not been fully involved or consulted by the two Governments or the three main pro-agreement parties: UUP, Sinn Féin & SDLP. He again returned to the point of inclusivity. He said that there were those in the UDP and elsewhere who feel that the lesson of recent events is "the squeaky gets the oil". He stated that he did not share that view. Regarding the Civic Forum, he felt that that avenue had been closed off by the assembly decision that the forum should not contain elected public representatives.

Flags & Emblems
He pointed to the last paragraph of the UFF statement. He said that he would like to see the issue of flags and emblems kicked to touch so that it wouldn't dominate the agenda over the coming months. He suggested that the Irish Government should put pressure on Sinn Féin not to provoke the issue agin by taking down union flags etc.

He said that he had spoken with a number of UUP council members and that he felt reasonably confident that Trimble would carry the day but with a majority of around 54-55%.

Personal observation
While Gary is clear and positive in expressing his views I personally felt that he is currently lacking self-confidence in his future ability to keep loyalists on board. He said that he had to contend with people who were not particularly rational and that his selling job was becoming increasingly difficult, and had not been helped by events at Hillsborough as previously described.

Yours sincerely,

Derek Mooney

DEREK MOONEY, P.C.

P.S. Enclosed is a fax from Kieran McGeown, an SDLP councillor from Lurgan.

TEXT: *Pat (Hynes), To-night at approx 7.30 pm *Cllr J. O'Dowd (SF) was stopped on the Lurgan/Portadown Road by the DMSU from Mahon Road/Portadown (RUC). He apparently was arrested under the PTA.*
*Subsequently at Lurgan RUC he was identified and released. At 21:45pm there again appeared to be a lot of military activity (UDR) on the same stretch of road. O'Dowd was behind me so I don't know if he got thru' the roadblock or not. All of this will cause concern – Kieran. *He was on his way to council meeting.*

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