

E.R.

~~Min Davies~~ to see return

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controversial just on to me
anything he has said was
not directly marked to me

PAB/9349/RE

cc: PS/S of S (I&B)
PS/PUS (I&B)
PS/Sir E Bell
Mr Abbott
Mr Edis

~~Mr Merifield~~

Mr Blattenwick's notes to the 203
point. X may have arisen from a
variety of reasons, but at face value it is
good sense, & emphasises again the key

THE UUP

importance of Dept's working with committees (not primarily through responses to proposals),
to produce that achievement from the Assembly system. No easy task. P. 15/2

1. You will have seen that as expected the threat by the UUP to make trouble over the devolution issue was raised over the weekend.

2. In a radio interview on Saturday, Mr McCusker said that the Assembly was pointless as it stood, that he had not been elected to be a scrutineer and that he would consider resignation from the Assembly if devolution was not achieved within 6 months. Mr Molyneaux expressed support for this attitude in a low key way (without threatening to resign). Martin Smyth today said in public that he hoped the party would decide in early March to press forward with proposals for devolution if not across the board, then on one or two subjects such as Agriculture or Health and Social Services.

3. Mr McCusker's comments drew criticism. Mr Robinson, for the DUP, commented that McCusker was trying to rush fences and attempting to wreck the Assembly. More to the point, perhaps, John Taylor said that in his view the Assembly would need at least a year before devolution could be considered, and that the Assembly was the best way ahead. He also said that Ulster people must strive to create institutions of Government administration "which earn widespread consent". He stressed that this did not mean a return to executive power sharing but the creation of structures within the Assembly involving participation in the decision-making process by all duly elected democratic politicians. (This looks like a typical Taylor attempt to distance himself from the party leadership and appear constructive while being careful not to commit himself to anything which might be embarrassing.)

4. The comments by Mr McCusker and Mr Smyth are no doubt warning shots and designed partly to embarrass the DUP. It would probably be a mistake for Government to try to respond in any way, for example by stressing the requirement in the 1982 Act for cross-community support. To do so would draw the UUP leadership's fire upon Ministers and give Mr Molyneaux the opportunity he wants to start an argument about power sharing and the alleged SDLP veto. In any event, the DUP and Alliance will, for their different reasons, want to take the UUP on, and for the

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Time being at least my inclination is to leave it to them to fight the Government's case.

D. S. Blatherwick

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Political Affairs Division

14 February 1983

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