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PC2016

PAB/58/RE

NOTE FOR THE RECORD

FRANK MILLAR: UUP

cc: PS/S of S (L&B)
PS/PUS (L&B)
PS/Sir E Bell
Mr Bourn
Mr Angel
Mr Merifield
Mr Carvill ✓
Mr Abbott ✓
Mr Boys Smith
Mr Coulson
Mr Edis
Mr Bickham

MA - Pol Dev file

1. I had lunch today with Frank Millar who was in one of his forthcoming "liberal" moods. The following points of interest arose from a wideranging discussion:

- i. European Election: In my company, Millar was predictably dismissive of John Taylor. Millar's preferred candidate for the UUP nomination was McCusker. Millar believes that Taylor will do somewhat better than anticipated although Paisley will top the poll. Interestingly Millar's assessment of the Sinn Fein vote was somewhat higher than others I have heard. He thought that Morrison could get between 105,000 - 120,000 first preference votes and would come very close to John Hume on the first round.
- ii. SDLP: Millar confirmed that no discussions had taken place between Mr Molyneaux and Mr Hume. Although there were "contacts" between the SDLP and the UUP there had been no serious discussion of the "way forward" document. Millar thought that discussions might open up after the European elections but kept insisting that it was for HMG to make political progress on the basis of party submissions. It was not for the parties themselves to engage in negotiations.
- iii. The Way Forward: Millar repeated the argument he had given Steve Hewitt (PAB/9024/JS) that the party's adoption of the devolution document represented a defeat for the "devolutionist wing". He claimed that the likes of David Trimble and Harry West were basically seeking a return to the old majority rule Stormont although they pretended that they were sympathetic to nationalist participation. The Millar/McCartney/Smyth group recognise that there was some need for "power-sharing" - although they could never call it by that label. The structure

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set out in the document acknowledges the need for a distribution of committee chairmanships and deputy chairmanships based upon party strengths. Although they had considered the possibility of weighted voting, they had not thought that this would be necessary. Instead, they saw the Secretary of State acting as a referee should the Assembly pass blatantly sectarian motions.

Millar also emphasised his party's willingness to agree to some kind of Bill of Rights to safeguard the minority position. He underlined the fact that this was the first occasion that the party had publicly supported such an idea. He was also at pains to say that the structure set out in the "way forward" should be regarded as a stepping-stone towards virtually full devolution. It was not an end in itself. He hastened to add that this was the view of the authors of the document and might not necessarily be accepted by all members of the party.

- iv. Anglo/Irish Relations: Millar was prepared for a strengthening of Anglo Irish relations, although they had to be on an east/west basis. There would be a recognition within the province that developments of relationships between the two sovereign States was outside the control of local politicians. It was, however, important that any proposed Parliamentary Tier should be between London and Dublin and should not involve members of the Assembly unless they were Westminster MPs. Apart from the Parliamentary layer Millar accepted that there was a range of areas of mutual concern whether the British and Irish Governments could and should develop their relations.

During a recent visit to Dublin, Millar had had a lengthy session with Michael Lillis of the DFA who had, again, tried to persuade him of the value of joint security policing in Northern Ireland. The argument was for the now familiar "palpable presence on the streets". Millar had dismissed the proposals out of hand.

- v. The Assembly: Millar had not been impressed by his first week in the Assembly and was critical of the proposed decision to recess for almost three months in the July/October period. He was hoping to persuade his party to oppose such a move. He,


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indirectly, confirmed that the question of Assembly Members' salaries had been a great embarrassment to the UUP and was one of the factors behind the ending of the boycott. Mr Kilfedder in his role as Speaker was now a target for the party in the coming weeks.

Comment

2. Throughout the conversation, Millar was at pains to display the liberal face of the UUP. The impression he was trying to convey was that, in return for progress along the path set out in "the way forward", his party would be prepared to go along with the thickening up of Anglo Irish relations and would attempt to find some cosmetic way of involving the SDLP in a devolved administrative structure. He was anxious to point out that the party's new approach did not involve integration in the sense of restoring powers to local authorities. Although Messrs Molyneaux and Powell still thought that that was the best approach, the remainder of the party (as represented by Millar) were no longer in favour of this solution. HMG should realise that there was not much separating the Government from the UUP when it came to finding an acceptable way of governing the province.



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Political Affairs Division

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