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2.10 30 SEP 2003

FROM: CHRIS MACCABE
Associate Political Director (B)
24 September 2003

copied to

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Billy Gumble

Everyday Community

cc: see distribution list

Interesting!

Derer.

2/10

To see if it can be

We can be involved in

X 18²

2/10

*he's to arrange
meeting DSD/OFMDM
to discuss
arrangements*

Stewart Eldon

LOYALISM AND THE IRISH: LUNCH WITH MARTIN McALEESE

*for
seminar*

Summary

Martin McAleese very frank about his contacts with senior Loyalists. Impressive in both their breadth and depth. Well aware of the potential pitfalls but so far things have gone remarkably well. Determined to press on for as long as possible, expanding the list of his Loyalist "friends" at every opportunity.

Detail

Thank you for facilitating a private chat with Martin McAleese over lunch at the Residence on Monday. It allowed us to hear at first hand what Martin has been up to: although we were already aware of much of what he told us, there were a few surprises.

2. Martin explained how he and President McAleese have been engaged in a social outreach to Unionists for some years. Through this activity they had come across the occasional Loyalist - Andy Tyrie was mentioned as an early visitor to Aras an Uachtaráin - but there had been nothing structured until about eight months ago: 3 February to be precise. On that day Martin had taken a call from the UDA's South Belfast Brigadier, Jackie McDonald, speaking from the office of Martin's friend, Belfast solicitor Denis Maloney. After a somewhat faltering start McDonald had explained that he and his associates in the UDA/UPRG would be keen to develop relationships with influential people south of the border. When Martin had checked that there would be no political

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objection to such a personal initiative, the first meeting was set up. Since then the contacts seem to have taken on a life of their own and have included

- a meeting in Aras an Uachtaráin involving 50 Unionists/Loyalists that focused on cross-community issues
- several meetings with the UDA Brigadiers (including a "jovial" Jim Gray) and others during which Jackie McDonald was clearly *primus inter pares*
- lunches/dinners/meetings in Dublin, Belfast and Armagh involving senior Loyalists, members of the Irish business community and members of the DFA
- social events, including golf outings, in which some or all of the UDA Brigadiers and their associates were involved. (On one such occasion Martin laid on a coach but the Brigadiers turned it down on the grounds of collective security and because it would look too much like a UDA day-trip. Alternative transport in a fleet of mini-buses was agreed; each vehicle was examined for "bugs and bombs" before his guests boarded it!)
- a visit to south and west Belfast by Martin and Tim Dalton on 19 July to see examples of deprivation in Loyalist areas. As a result of this visit some £250,000 has been promised for learning centres in these areas, most of it coming from Irish business sources
- the very successful visit to Belfast last Friday by Martin and the President which included a tour of the Fernhill House Museum in the company of members of the UDA. Martin was delighted that this event had gone so well and we commented on the remarkably favourable press coverage it had received.

3. Martin also mentioned the parallel work being done by an influential cross-border group of businessmen and Permanent Secretaries, encouraged and organised by Tim O'Connor, the Irish Joint Secretary in Armagh, and his efforts to widen the net of rich

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business backers to include some Americans. Whilst admitting to being a relative innocent abroad, he said he was struck by the sincerity of all those he had met, and would tend to take them at face value until he knew otherwise. For our part we commended his initiative and the progress that had been made. We said that, given the provenance of some of the characters involved, and the need for transparency, accountability and inter- and intra-community equality, we couldn't hope to match his activities on this side of the border. But this should not impede him, quite the contrary indeed.

4. Finally Martin made two requests. The first, which he said was heartfelt, was that the positive contribution that Loyalists are making to the present - relatively peaceful - situation on the ground should be acknowledged by the Secretary of State and/or Ministers on an appropriate occasion (**Robert Hannigan to note please**). The second was that his contacts would very much appreciate an in-depth briefing (perhaps at a half-day seminar) on the Local Community Fund, Community Action Groups etc. I said I would discuss this with colleagues in the OFMDFM and get back to him. X

5. In conclusion, Martin said that although his contact had been primarily with the UDA and their associates, he had been able to confirm that the PUP/UVF had no objection to this. I said that was our impression too. He also confirmed that Sinn Féin's position was that, provided any benefits that derived for Loyalism were mirrored in the Nationalist community, they would not complain. To ensure that the PUP/UVF were kept on board, he would be dining with the Party's Chairman, David Rose, and Secretary, Dawn Purvis, later this week. He was hopeful that this would lead to direct contact with someone on the military side, possibly Bunter Graham, before long. He also has tentative plans for some sort of dialogue with members of the DUP.

Chris Maccabe

C G MACCABE
WH Ext 83910/11
028 90 443910/11

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Loyalism and the Irish: Lunch with Martin McAleese