

# NATIONAL ARCHIVES

## IRELAND



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# ROINN AN TAOISIGH

*Mr. Morrow*  
*18/9/84*  
*For information please*

Uimhir.....

*18/9/84*  
*[Signature]*

To:

From:

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

British Irish Association Annual Conference in  
Cambridge - 14-16 September, 1984.

Although the proceedings of this Conference are confidential and off the record, it is still difficult to accurately judge the weight one should give to the various contributions from the Northern politicians and others. With that qualification in mind these are some general impressions which I formed during the course of the week-end, based on the contributions to the various sessions and conversations with individuals:-

- The fact that the main Opposition Party did not send a representative to the Conference was commented on very critically.
- The attitudes of the main Unionist parties is a curious mixture of "not an inch" and flexibility. Frank Millar of the OUP said that they would never share power in a devolved Parliament with the minority community but he laid emphasis on the flexibility enshrined in their "Way Forward" document. He spoke of there being other ways besides power sharing, for involving the minority community in the affairs of Northern Ireland and pleaded with the SDLP to come and talk to them in the Assembly. He voiced strident opposition to any interference with Northern Ireland Courts or the security forces. Any such action would he claimed "light the final fuse". Peter Robinson <sup>sup.</sup> spoke of the present time being "a unique period of opportunity". His Party is publishing its proposals for the Government of Northern Ireland later this week. This was the first time the DUP were represented at the Conference and Robinson adopted quite a flexible approach.

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- From listening to Unionist speakers I gained the distinct impression that any initiatives which are seen by unionists as "interfering" with the Courts or the RUC would meet with strenuous opposition from them. (Sir Jack Harmon spoke very defensively about RUC activities and was not prepared to accept that any problem existed with the Force). In conversation with me on the Saturday, Frank Millar of the OUP was highly critical of what he saw as John Hume's exclusion of the majority in Northern Ireland from decisions in relation to the structures of Government in the Province. (Hume had been laying emphasis on the Dublin/London solution whose Parliaments represented 59 million of the 60 million people of both islands).
- I encountered some criticism of the Government's articulation of its role as protector of the nationalist people. The point was made that if a unitary State was the ultimate aim, the line being followed did not hold out much hope for the other tradition in the North being given any welcome or protection in a united Ireland and only confirmed that tradition in their view of the Dublin Government.
- It was put to me by a prominent public figure in the South that the SDLP would have to be encouraged to "lower their sights". If they didn't they could be left out on a limb with their supporters in the North. They had to think in terms of what was realisable in the short to medium term and not what might be achieved in the long term. There had to be a building block process and the SDLP should be encouraged to come back to this. These comments were <sup>in part,</sup> a reaction to the remarks of the Deputy Leader of

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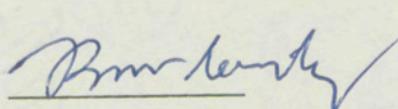
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the SDLP, Seamus Mallon, at the Conference. I pointed out that the latter's remark could not be taken as reflecting the views of the majority in that Party.

  
18/5/84

B. McCarthy.