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Reference Code:	2017/10/26
Creation Dates:	24 December 1987
Extent and medium:	3 pages
Creator(s):	Department of the Taoiseach
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CONFIDENTIAL - BY COURIER SERVICE

24 December 1987

Dear Assistant Secretary

Lunch with Frank Millar, former Chief Executive of the
Ulster Unionist Party

1. Millar resigned from his position with the UUP last October to accept an offer to become a researcher at London Weekend Television "Weekend World". After a difficult transition moving his family (wife and 2 young children) he is feeling more settled in London now. He is particularly pleased that he did well in a recent TV screen test which means that he is likely to become a reporter researcher.
2. Millar formally denies that he would be willing to return to Northern Ireland if a political opportunity arose. Nevertheless, he remains intensely interested in N.I. politics and is clearly in telephone contact with friends in Belfast regularly. His immediate reasons for leaving Belfast are the lack of support for the Task Force Report and the intense campaign against him in the Newsletter. He is an impatient young man who as he became less young, grew increasingly impatient with the senior UUP figures. He makes no effort to hide his scorn for the political abilities of Jim Molyneaux or either of his likely successors, Martin Smyth and John Taylor. At the same time he admits that they

outmanoeuvred him and his Task Force strategy. He recalled that when he, Robinson and McCusker met the divisional leaders of the Orange Order (Martin Smyth stayed away) that they refused to offer any support for power sharing: clearly, he concluded, Smyth had steered them against the pre-scripted report of the Task Force. He also recalled how when they met Archbishop Eames that McCusker confided to him his power sharing aspirations and the need for new unionist leadership; Eames said he shared these views. Millar thinks that not only did Eames report McCusker's views to Molyneaux but then Eames refused to support publicly the Task Force Report when it was published.

3. By contrast, Ian Paisley made no secret of his opposition to power sharing when he met the Task Force trio. He said to McCusker that he, at least, was honest about his intentions but the other two (Robinson and Millar) were secretive. Millar argues that Paisley will always be an opposition politician who will try to wreck any positive proposals. The only hope for unionism would be a realignment whereby the 'progressive' elements in the UUP and DUP came together. In the UUP however, the progressives remained a tiny group: Millar, Peter Smyth ("a bit player due to his legal practice"), Jack Allan, Ken Maginnis, Ray Ferguson and McCusker.
4. Millar confirmed McCusker's cancer and said that a recent operation had removed some cancer from the groin. In another six months doctors would check to see if it affects the lymph system. But he believes that McCusker will avoid an early resignation of his seat in the House of Commons because he has no other interests. In the event of a vacancy Millar doubts David Burnside's ability to get the nomination; however, I would guess that Millar's hat would also be in the ring. Millar said, incidentally, that McCusker spoke very highly of you to him recently.

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5. Nor does Millar expect Molyneaux to go early. He has no other interests and no family. Perhaps he will retire at the end of 1989 and the only way to speed it up would be for the Queen to make him a Lord (he could not accept it from Mrs Thatcher).

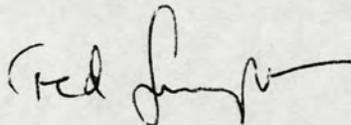
6. As for the political future, Millar believes that there is sufficient support in N.I. from both countries for a power sharing executive if Britain were to impose it. He reluctantly accepts, however, that Britain is unlikely to impose it given (a) the resistance from many unionists, including Paisley; (b) the horrendous complications of devolving control over security and (c) the absence of serious pressure from either Hume or Dublin for devolution.

7. Nevertheless, he sees a problem for the Agreement as long as Unionists are not part of it. They may have come to terms with the Agreement but they are not working it and the November review offers an opportunity to weaken Dublin's role. Millar hears from his NIO friends that the "talks about talks" are a farce and will get nowhere.

Comment

Millar is sufficiently intelligent, tough and ambitious to be at some stage a unionist leader who will take greater risks to secure unionist interests. A federal Ireland might not be beyond his reach. It is likely that he will soon find an opportunity to return to Belfast, refreshed and ready for the political challenge.

Yours sincerely



Ted Smyth