

CONFIDENTIAL

298/5

K R.

PAB/2970/RE

PS/Secretary of State (B)

① *Su Enok*

② *PAL*

cc: PS/S of S (L)
PS/Lord Gowrie (L&B)
PS/Mr Bell
Mr Blelloch
Mr Marshall
Mr Angel
Mr Wyatt
Mr Abbott
Mr Harrington
Miss MacGlashan
Mr Gilliland

SEAMUS MALLON'S APPOINTMENT
TO THE SENATE

1. You may like a brief summary of what we know about Seamus Mallon's appointment to the Senate in Dublin.
2. Dublin Governments have in the past sounded out the SDLP over possible appointments to the Senate. I am told that some years ago they wanted to appoint John Hume. The SDLP's attitude on previous occasions has been that the Party should not compromise its neutrality vis a vis southern politics by accepting nomination by one or other of the main Parties; and that involvement in the Senate would detract from the ability of the person concerned to work for the Party in the North.
3. There is little doubt that Seamus Mallon was eager to accept the appointment. He has for some time cultivated his links with Fianna Fail and Mr Haughey in particular. He makes no secret of his belief that the northern problem can only be sorted out between London and Dublin and he regards the White Paper proposals as an attempt to provide for an internal settlement in the North which is bound to fail. Some have suggested that Mallon seeks personal advancement: this may be so, but I am sure it is not his main motive.
4. According to Austin Currie, the Taoiseach sounded John Hume out in private before making the appointment (whether he spoke to Hume before Mallon I doubt). Hume gave his approval, but realised that the move would not be popular in his Party. Neither he nor Mallon told anyone else in the Party before the appointment was announced, even though a meeting of the Executive took place two or three days before the announcement. Several members of the Executive have told me that after the announcement Hume was careful not to make himself available. Mallon smartly went off on a two-week speaking tour of the US. He claims that it was funded by himself and the organisations whom he was to address. His critics in the SDLP find it hard to believe he is not travelling on Irish Government money.

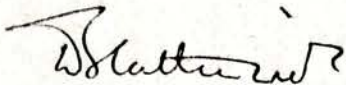
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

5. The appointment was criticised by senior SDLP members - notably Cormack Boomer, the Belfast Councillor. He and five other members of the Party Executive (including Currie and Paddy O'Hanlon) called for a special meeting to discuss the affair. It was held on 19 May and resulted in a statement welcoming the appointment and Mallon's decision not to accept a party whip in the Senate.

6. The appointment divided the Party along a green/less-green divide. Mallon's supporters come mainly from senior Party ranks West of the Bann and in Armagh; his critics from Belfast, Down and Newry. The latter group include most of the moderates in the Party - Currie, McGrady, Hendron and O'Hanlon for example. But there is no doubt that at grassroots the SDLP see the appointment as an honour for the SDLP and are pleased to have their man in Dublin.

7. The affair has emphasised the differences of view within the Party and disheartened the moderates. It has probably strengthened the position of those who put the Irish Dimension above power-sharing as the Party's main tactical aim. It has also shown up Hume's tendency to avoid nasty decisions and fail to give a clear lead.



D E S BLATHERWICK
Political Affairs Division

21 May 1982

CONFIDENTIAL