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Wally
To see this explanation of a particularly
unfortunate development in *Winn*
Fermanagh/South Tyrone bye-election

1.4.1981

1. I had a brief conversation with Seamus Mallon today about recent developments in relation to the bye-election. He said that the SDLP party executive had decided to withdraw Austin Currie's nomination on Sunday 29 March after receiving strong reassurances from Noel Maguire that he would maintain his candidature and in the light of strong feelings among SDLP supporters in the constituency that they should not put up a ~~C~~andidate. Mr. Mallon would go so far as to say that party workers in the constituency would not have mounted an active campaign for an SDLP candidate. The strong feeling was that Mr. Maguire should not have been opposed. Now that Maguire had "done the dirty" on them, he and the SDLP leadership were "sickened" by the outcome which would do them considerable damage.

2. The SDLP had made a major tactical mistake in not waiting until mid-afternoon on Monday to withdraw. They had however been convinced of Maguire's sincerity. It appeared that the Sands family and the Provos had exerted very strong pressure on Maguire who had backed down as a result.

3. It was now likely that Sands even if he did not win the seat would get a substantial vote which would be gleefully used by the Provos not only in Northern Ireland but internationally to justify their activities.

4. He mentioned, in addition that Currie had not been viewed as a "strong" candidate by the SDLP.

Martin Burke
31 March 1981

c.c. PSM
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