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28 January, 1993.

Mr. Sean O hUiginn,
Assistant Secretary,
Anglo-Irish Division,
Department of Foreign Affairs,
Dublin.

Conversation with Seamus Mallon and Joe Hendron

Dear Assistant Secretary,

The following points, arising from a conversation which Mr McMahon and myself had last night, 27 January, with Seamus Mallon and Joe Hendron may be of interest. Mallon had joined us in Mr. McMahon's apartment to view the BBC Timewatch programme. He discussed with Mr. McMahon the line he might take in today's 'Talkback'. He was entirely dismissive of the programme's methodology and much of its substance.

Both of us were very struck by Mallon's sense of real concern about Hume's health. Hume has now gone on a short two week holiday with his wife and in his absence Mallon and Hendron are meeting this morning with the Secretary of State. Mallon, fresh from a two week golfing holiday - "the best I ever had" - is in fine form but gloomy about the prospects of the talks re-starting. He went over the usual ground in well familiar terms focusing in particular on his concerns about the need to get security and policing right. He spoke at length on the need for the SDLP to stand firm on its principles since, as he put it, the party holds a very thin line between itself and Sinn Fein. He is convinced that few people outside Northern Ireland fully appreciate that if the SDLP were seen to sell the pass, nationalist voters would have little hesitation in switching their political allegiance.

Before we met Hendron for dinner, Mallon had spoken to Brendan McMahon and myself about his anxiety that Hendron would be led seriously astray by the charm offensive which he is being subjected to by the NIO Ministers and their respective PPSs. According to Mallon, Hendron is being "played like a trout" - the bait being hints of empty promises on job creation schemes for West Belfast. Hendron has agreed to pair with junior NIO Minister Jeremy Hanley. Mallon, who is deeply mistrustful of Hanley, feels that Hendron will be persuaded to break ranks on an important vote thereby embarrassing the party and himself. Mallon foresees a scenario in which Hanley or his colleague, Robert Atkins, will arrange an important meeting for Hendron in Belfast on one or other of the latter's pet job creation projects, deliberately timed to coincide with an important vote at Westminster thereby providing Hendron with a perfect excuse to absent himself.

Hendron himself is unaware of any danger on this front. He speaks warmly of his growing friendship with "my friend, Jeremy" and retells anecdotes from his frequent tete-a-tetes with Mayhew's PPS, Michael Brown and his colleague Jerry Hayes, PPS to Robert Atkins. Brown has closely followed Hendron's electoral funds case and, on one occasion

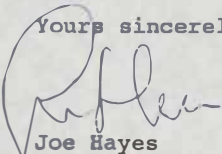
recently, told me that he had privately offered Hendron the assistance of Conservative Central Office experts on electoral law. Brown also said that Mayhew made a special point of encouraging Hendron, inviting him for drinks to his office and stopping for friendly chats in the corridors of Westminster. All of this only serves to further convince Mallon that Hendron's naivete will land him and the party in trouble.

There is still no date set for the delivery of the reserved judgement in Hendron's court case. Hendron is resigned to losing the case and knows that, as a minimum, he will have to pay heavy legal costs - a figure of £60,000 or £70,000 was mentioned. He is hopeful, however, that this will be the extent of the damage although Jerry Hayes told him that he should brace himself for the worst viz. loss of his seat. We warned him against placing too much credence in what Jerry Hayes might tell him. Hendron is currently pondering how he will raise sufficient money to pay the legal costs. He is proposing to write personally to wealthy businessmen North and South.

Apart from the outcome of the court case, Hendron's other main preoccupation just now is with a job creation project which he is pursuing with Cecil Walker. You may recall that Hendron and Walker travelled to the US together last October on a much publicised job creation programme. He talked at great length about possible investment projects in West Belfast, notably an electronics factory on the Glen Road. Hendron's enthusiasm for this project however is not apparently shared by the AIB who have refused to finance it. Hendron clearly gets on extremely well with Walker. It was, for example, Hendron who persuaded Walker to come to our election night party. His friendship with Walker has provided him with some revealing insights into the internal tensions within the OUP. He told us, for example, that Walker cannot abide Martin Smyth. Walker is perfectly open about his contempt for Smyth who apparently, on one occasion, sought to have Walker replaced as a candidate for North Belfast. Walker is equally scathing about David Trimble.

We also discussed the widespread speculation that, on Jim Molyneaux's retirement, David Burnside would be nominated to replace him in the Lagan Valley. Mallon told us that he has, over the years, collected a substantial entitlement to free air miles from British Airways. He recently applied for these, only to discover that the computer had credited him with only 40 miles. Mallon is convinced that Burnside fixed the BA computer to defraud him of his legitimate entitlement. There was a feeling that Burnside is such a deeply unpleasant character that Molyneaux will draw the line at having him succeed him although, as Hendron pointed out, any party that would nominate Trimble might also find room for David Burnside. I met Burnside at the Conservative Party Conference and he spoke with what seemed like real feeling of his wish to return to a farm which he owns in Antrim. This excess of emotion, however, may not have been unconnected with the scandal surrounding his involvement in British Airways dirty tricks campaign against Virgin Atlantic which had become public the previous morning.

Yours sincerely,



Joe Hayes
Counsellor